

Community college president's perceptions of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic

by

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B.S., Wayne State College, 1989

M.A., Bellevue University, 1992

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Abstract

Although campus crises have been an ever-present aspect of college life, they have been increasing in number and intensity. While disasters prompted many colleges to prepare crisis plans, the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges. Effective and timely crisis leadership can affect the crisis outcome. By understanding the leadership styles and behaviors used in a crisis, it can inform best practices for handling future campus crises.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how the COVID 19 pandemic affected leadership styles and behaviors of Midwestern community college presidents. The study is primarily driven by one question, what are Midwestern community college presidents' perceptions of how their leadership and decisions had changed in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Study data were collected through semi-structured interviews and artifacts. The interviews were analyzed using thematic coding looking for common patterns and themes.

The data were examined using a theoretical framework of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism. The conceptual framework incorporated crisis leadership styles, effective leadership competencies, and crisis leadership competencies within the context of community college governance and the COVID-19 crisis. The conceptual framework was to further understand how community college president's leadership style and behaviors had changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community college presidents navigated the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the study results, there are five recommendations for practice. The five recommendations are: prioritize safety of faculty, staff, students and the community; develop broad-based crisis management programs, encourage leaders to include mental health services in crisis planning, leverage crisis communications, and understand the criticality of connections.

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Approved by:

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I came across a quotation that really resonates with how I feel about this process. Eiji Yoshikawa says, “The summit is believed to be the object of the climb. But its true object—the joy of living –is not in the peak itself, but in the adversities encountered on the way up.”

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents Meredith and Louis. Although they passed many years ago, the love, support and wonderful memories I had with them will remain with me forever. Those cherished memories on the farm have sustained me during some challenging times. Many of my values, morals, and life views are attributed to them. I love them immensely.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Crises such as: 9/11, campus violence, mental health issues and numerous natural disasters encouraged many colleges to prepare crisis plans (Illanes et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic tested the limits for college disaster plans. Although difficult, many colleges responded by quickly closing residence halls and moving classes online. Dealing with COVID-19 was particularly challenging for colleges due to the wide variety of functions provided. College employees were concerned about their future, while research projects, admissions, and student and faculty recruitment remained in limbo due to many unanswered questions. Many students wondered when they would return to campus or even if it would be safe to do so. Others were concerned the return may be short lived due to any potential large outbreaks and pondered taking a gap year. Travel restrictions had international students questioning their academic future. Students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community all looked to college leadership for answers (Illanes et al., 2020).

Background

In everyday situations leaders have the gift of time and can leverage their leadership styles and past experiences to develop solutions to problems as they arise (Berry, 2013). In times of crisis leaders are often faced with new, high stakes situations that threaten their careers and their institution's future. Sound leadership is crucial to organizational survival during campus crises (Boin & t' Hart 2003; t' Hart et al., 1993).

Campus crises are such a pervasive aspect of our daily lives that many have become numb when reading the headlines. Mitroff and Anagnos (2001) reaffirm the crisis prevalence by stating, "Crises are no longer an aberrant, rare, random, or peripheral feature of today's society. They are built into the very fabric of modern societies" (p. 5). As society has evolved, so has the

volume and intensity of disasters (Gainey, 2009; Sutherland, 2013). Education has a turbulent crisis history often resulting in dire consequences for both the college and its stakeholders (Booker, 2011; Garcia, 2015; Merriman, 2008; Sutherland, 2013).

Campus crises are not a new phenomenon. The first mass school shooting occurred more than fifty years ago when a military trained sniper shot at individuals from the University of Texas at Austin's (UT) Tower in 1966 (Badi & Pasley, 2019; Ponder, 2018). Lasting over 90 minutes, the killing spree left 16 dead and 31 injured and was often referred to as the Whitman or UT Tower shootings (Badi & Pasley, 2019; Jankowski, 2016; Ponder, 2018).

The active shooter concept was new so higher education and police departments did not have contingency plans for addressing this type of crisis (Eberly, 2004; Ponder, 2018; Texas Tower, n.d.). Following the shooting, UT officials attempted to minimize the event (Eberly, 2004). Regarding the UT crisis response, Ponder (2018) lamented, "as if erasing the blood and glass would erase the memories" (p. 244).

Due to the Tower Massacre, media coverage of these tragic events would become customary (Texas Tower, n.d.). Unfortunately, many felt this media coverage, as well as gun availability, accelerated the rapid increase of mass killings that occurred over the following decades (Texas Tower, n.d.). With the UT Tower Shooting, a greater focus was placed on the shooter rather than the victims (Eberly, 2004). In fact, some of the media even glorified Whitman's actions (Jankowski, 2016; Ponder, 2018).

The UT Tower incident prompted increased safety procedures such as the founding of the UT police force (Ponder, 2018). Police departments around the country created special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams to contend with shooters (Eckhart, 2016). Schools enhanced security features and protocols. In addition, greater emphasis was placed on developing new security

oriented technology (Ponder, 2018). The field of threat assessment dramatically expanded (Follman, 2015). In fact, today threat assessment teams can often be found on college campuses (Follman, 2015).

Why did Charles Whitman go on a killing spree? Whitman was described as a good student, Eagle Scout, and a marine (Ponder, 2018). Gayle Ross, a junior, described Whitman as “a nice, clean-cut, all American kind of guy” (Colloff, 2006, p. 107). On the inside, however, Whitman had significant issues (Ponder, 2018). Despite being honorably discharged from the Marines, his military service was troubling (Ponder, 2018). He had assaulted his wife, abused Dexedrine, and continuously changed jobs (Lavergne, 2007; Taboada, 2016). Autopsy results revealed a large tumor on Whitman’s brain (Sweet et al., 1969). Whether the tumor contributed to Whitman’s actions will, according to Lavergne (2007) “probably be debated forever” (p. 267).

The public was confused by the inability to find a medical cause or an explanation for Whitman’s behavior (Ponder, 2018). Looking for answers, some thought Whitman’s actions were due to his abusive upbringing with a father who repeatedly beat Whitman’s mother and aggressively disciplined Whitman (Lavergne, 2007). Like his father, Whitman assaulted his wife. Complaining of headaches and having violent thoughts, Whitman sought medical help at the UT Health Center where he was prescribed Valium and a psychiatric referral. Despite telling his psychiatrist, Dr. Maurice Heatly, about his fantasy of shooting people from the tower, Heatly did not take the threat seriously (Ponder, 2018).

According to Blair et al. (2014), active shooter situations are different from other acts of gun violence in two ways. First, the shooter does not plan to survive. Second, it is difficult to find an easily understandable external motivation (Blair et al., 2014). The UT shooting was the

dawn of a new horrific reality where shooters do not value the lives of others or even their own life (Lavergne, 2007). Lavergne (2007) agonized,

The Whitman story is enduring because it was our introduction to public mass murder and school shootings. It also preys on our worst fear: A stranger aims and kills you because he wants to -- and he doesn't give a damn that he, too, is about to die (para. 2).

Murphey (2019) stated “Mass shootings are a public health crisis” (para. 25). These occurrences may be preventable since both the UT Tower incident and most mass killings are premeditated (Follman, 2015). In addition, both Whitman and other snipers provided signals before the shootings occurred (Follman, 2015). Follman (2015) furthered “mass murder is not an impulsive crime. Forensic investigations show that virtually every one of these attacks is a predatory crime, methodically planned and executed” (para. 20). As a result, Reid Meloy, a forensic psychologist from the University of California-San Diego, encouraged using the threat assessment process of “identifying, evaluating, and intervening” since in many situations social and mental health interventions can be used to prevent the event from occurring (as cited in Follman, 2015, para. 13). Ponder (2018) asserted the Tower massacre impacted not only those who survived and witnessed the tragedy, but it also became a collective trauma for UT and the city of Austin.

Since that fateful day in 1966, there have been numerous examples of education’s turbulent crisis history such as the Texas A and M bonfire in 1999 (Vogelaar, 2007), the tornadoes that ravaged the University of Alabama in 2011 (Catullo, 2008), and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 that caused \$100 billion in damage in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama (Appleton, 2019) and the closing of several educational institutions (Lipka, 2005). Hundreds of school shootings have occurred including the Virginia Tech tragedy that resulted in 33 deaths

and 15 wounded (Hauser & O'Connor, 2007; Keneally, 2019). Mann (2007) asserted that Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Virginia Tech incident in 2007 were the impetus for colleges to devise crisis management plans.

In 2011, tornadoes ravaged Alabama and nearby states resulting in 200 deaths and leaving many wounded (Simmons & Sutter, 2012). Although the University of Alabama campus did not receive a direct hit, the nearby campus town was dealt a devastating blow (Simmons & Sutter, 2012). As a result, many students sought housing in the University of Alabama recreational center (Drabek, 2013). The University of Alabama responded by cancelling classes for the rest of the school year providing an example of how tragedies can significantly impact both the community and the institution (Simmons & Sutter, 2012).

One of the great concerns for student safety is fire. As stated by Merriman (2008), campus fires have resulted in multiple deaths, injuries, displaced students, and property loss. Murray State University in Kentucky experienced a devastating arson fire in 1998 resulting in the deaths of 16 students, several injuries, and the need to relocate 100 students (Meilman, 2006). The University of North Carolina suffered from a fraternity house fire in 1996 resulting in five student deaths (Merriman, 2008). In 2002 a fire at DePauw University in Indiana resulted in \$1 million in damages and the evacuation of 116 residents from the building (Merriman, 2008). Additionally, more than 200 students had to be moved from surrounding buildings (Merriman, 2008).

History has shown that no institution, regardless of location or size, is safe from a potential catastrophe (Bates, 2015). A wide variety of crises ranging from health crises, natural disasters, terrorism, or financial collapse, may impact colleges and college leadership must be ready to react (Muffet-Willet, 2010; Murphey, 2019; Sutherland, 2013; Zdziarski et al., 2007).

Jacobsen (2010) discovered ten different strategies were utilized by educational leadership during a crisis. These strategies were (a) focus on safety, (b) direct the planning and development of policy, (c) gather resources, (d) direct a focused communication effort, (e) refine organizational infrastructure, (f) take accountability for crisis leadership, (g) change leadership style, (h) verbalize the crisis for stakeholders, (i) direct the restorative process, and (j) direct the educational efforts regarding the crisis (Jacobsen, 2010). Based on Jacobsen's (2010) research, leadership approaches used are dictated by the amount of destruction not the type of crisis.

Leaders in crisis move through familiar stages, soliciting a wide range of leadership knowledge and skills (Jacobsen, 2010). It is more important than ever that educational leaders are equipped to appropriately respond to crises since potential outcomes can include economic loss, damaged reputation, property damage and injury or even death (Booker, 2011; Mitroff et al., 2006).

Leadership actions can profoundly impact campus safety, as well as student retention, revenue and reputation (Catullo, 2008; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Wooten and James (2008) asserted it is essential to assess a leader's crisis leadership abilities to ensure they are properly prepared in case an actual crisis occurs.

Crisis leadership research is largely focused on the corporate, political, and military fields, with minimal study regarding this phenomenon in the field of higher education (Dolan, 2006; Jacobsen, 2010; Sweeny, 2008). Jacobsen's (2010) research is one of the few examples that focused on higher education. Jacobsen (2010) examined leadership adversities as well as the strategies employed during a college campus crisis. Jacobsen's (2010) research uncovered eight key issues that campus administrators were confronted with during a crisis. These key issues included: (a) leading despite having a loss of control, (b) working with ineffective systems, (c) evaluating and making decisions simultaneously, (d) changing operations and all interactions, (e)

making changes during a crisis, (f) handling crisis communications, (g) dealing with stakeholders, and (h) addressing lasting consequences (Jacobsen, 2010). Jacobsen (2010) declared “Policy development is a powerful means of bringing structure to a chaotic situation and of demonstrating an ethic of care” (p. iv). Despite Jacobsen’s (2010) work, there is minimal emphasis regarding studying leadership crisis response. Most of the research focus has been placed on studying and implementing crisis management for educational institutions across the country (Garcia, 2015). As a result, educational institutions, asserted Jarrell et al. (2008), do not seem ready to handle serious disasters. A 2004 study discovered that most colleges were only prepared for the types of disasters they had previously experienced (Mitroff et al., 2006).

Crisis Management in Higher Education

Lerner et al. (2003) defined crisis as “a traumatic event that seriously disrupts our coping and problem-solving abilities. It is typically unpredicted, volatile in nature and may even threaten our survival” (p. 11). Despite overall conceptual agreement regarding crisis management, there is not a universally accepted definition of crisis amongst disciplines (Coombs, 2012; Hermann, 1972; Levitt, 1997; Mitroff, 2004; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Crises do, however, share familiar elements (Sutherland, 2013). Even though it would be difficult to argue that certain events are a crisis, the definition of a crisis is perceptually based (Coombs, 2012). Crises endanger organizations, property, individuals and the environment, and many occur without warning (Coombs, 2012; Harper et al., 2006; Hermann, 1972; Muffet-Willett, 2010; Trela, 2008). The events of the crisis often gain widespread coverage through the internet, television, newspapers, and even magazines (Joly, 2008). Even though crisis events are not planned, they should be anticipated (Sutherland, 2013).

Over time crises have become increasingly sophisticated (Sutherland, 2013). Small commotions disseminate rapidly through the brimming networks connecting them (Boin, 2009). Boin (2009) declared “Modernization has created highways for failure that leverage the effects of emerging threats (be they man-made or natural)” (p. 370). Interconnectivity between systems, organizations, and countries have made crisis management more costly and challenging (Coombs, 2012). Additionally, another common component is the necessity for an expedient reply (Zdziarski et al., 2007). Leadership must have their plans in place prior to the crisis event. Globalization and state-of-the-art technology necessitate rapid responses from leaders (Sutherland, 2013). Crises commonly have the ability to disrupt normal business operations (Zdziarski, 2001; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). Today, in times of crisis, an entire network of organizations is involved (Boin, 2009).

Lessons Learned

The astonishing devastation left by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 spurred many colleges to prepare crisis management plans. It took more than two hours after the initial shots before Virginia Tech students in other areas of campus were notified of the crisis (Fox & Savage, 2009). Following the Virginia Tech incident, parents of the victims asked for the resignations of the college president and campus police (Thompson et al., 2009). As a result, Virginia Tech ensured their communication systems could instantly notify all essential individuals, including the community, in the event of a future incident (Sutherland, 2013; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Further, it led to the government banning any firearms on campus (Thompson et al., 2009). Due to the Virginia Tech tragedy, many novel approaches were realized that had universal applicability and the recognition that crisis plans needed to be continually

reviewed and adjusted (Sutherland, 2013). Most notably there was a need for overall campus coordination (Jarrell et al., 2008).

As stated by Lipka (2005), “Hurricane Katrina was an unprecedented disaster for higher education. It forced full institutional closures longer than any on record, and it ravaged a whole region of colleges and universities” (p. A28). Educational administrators across the country closely watched how schools handled the fallout following Hurricane Katrina (Sutherland, 2013). For many, Hurricane Katrina became a case study regarding how to deal with a crisis (Sutherland, 2013). Michael F. Middaugh, president of the Society for College and University Planning and assistant vice president for institutional research and planning at the University of Delaware commented, “I would be amazed if there was an institution in this country that’s not going back and reviewing its disaster policy” (Lipka, 2005, p. A28).

Student persistence was a concern at Delgado Community College (DCC) following Hurricane Katrina (Jarrell et al., 2008). DCC provided students with the option and important access to online learning (Jarrell et al., 2008). Students involved in the online learning had greater interactions both academically and socially (Jarrell et al., 2008). Students were very dependent upon each other and their faculty for necessary support and course updates (Jarrell et al., 2008). Lipka (2005) stated that communication was the most important aspect of dealing with a crisis. Moving to an online format posed many challenges including faculty inexperienced with online instruction, students not prepared for a different mode of learning, insufficient student advising, limited technical support, limited face-to-face-interaction, and limited time to develop course materials (Jarrell et al., 2008).

Campus crisis impacts not only current but also prospective students (Kelsay, 2007). Following a football scandal at the University of Colorado, student admissions decreased by

19% for out-of-state and 4% for in-state students (Mitroff et al., 2006). How leaders handle a crisis may impact the future of an educational institution (Zdziarski et al., 2007). Zdziarski (2001) conducted a comprehensive study to assess higher education's crisis management readiness. Results of Zdziarski's (2001) study indicated 86.3% of colleges had a plan for at least one of the four crisis categories: natural, facility, criminal, and human. The responses, however, were based on their perception of preparedness and indicated reactive versus proactive crisis management practices (Zdziarski, 2001).

In 2004, Mitroff et al.'s (2006) survey of 350 major institutions indicated most were only ready to handle a crisis that had previously happened at their campus. Colleges were most equipped to handle fires, lawsuits, and crimes (Mitroff et al., 2006). As a result, many colleges have been focusing on crisis management planning (Lipka, 2005). Mitroff et al.'s (2006) study underscored the lack of specificity in most educational institution's crisis management plans. Educational institutions, asserted Jarrell et al. (2008), do not seem ready to handle serious disasters. As stated by Mitroff et al. (2006), "few of the surveyed institutions have broad-based crisis management programs" or "broad-based crisis-management teams, with members drawn from different administrative, faculty, and technical areas" (p. 66). It is essential that campus leaders have crisis management plans to cover a wide range of potential scenarios (Jarrell et al., 2008).

Crisis response is important; but minimal study has been conducted regarding how a leader should respond during a crisis (Dolan, 2006; Sweeny, 2008). Educational administrators have great accountability and responsibility including being concerned with the organization's future success and viability (Yukl & Becker, 2006). Past crisis affecting educational institutions indicate the necessity to reevaluate higher education leadership (Weiss, 2002). Effective

leadership increases the likelihood of a more favorable outcome and is essential during a crisis (Muffet-Willet, 2010). Successful outcomes, asserted Jacobsen (2010), include decreasing stakeholder losses, and using lessons learned for future planning. Mitroff et al. (2006) posited the importance of viewing the crisis from all stakeholders' viewpoints. Learning about community college presidents' perceptions during a crisis, particularly whether they changed their behaviors or leadership styles during a crisis, may provide valuable insight regarding effective crisis leadership (Bishop, 2013). Leaders may need to change their leadership style based on the situation (Fiedler, 1964). Moreover, leaders who are successful in everyday situations may not be as successful during a crisis (Boin, 2009). Hesselbein (2012) asserted crisis management "is a test of the quality and the character of leadership as much as it is a test of skill" (p. 56).

Governance of Community Colleges

To fully understand crisis leadership in education, it is important to be cognizant of how governance works in higher education. Weick (1976) referred to colleges as loosely coupled systems meaning the various units work together in unexpected ways yet still maintain their individual identities. While many individuals have tried to classify the governing structures (Cohen et al., 2014), Richardson (1975) recommended using models to further understand how colleges are organized and managed. Of the three educational models developed by Richardson (1975), bureaucratic, political, and collegial, for community colleges the best alignment is with the bureaucratic and political models. Under the bureaucratic model, there is a formalized organizational structure, with authority being delegated from the top down. Organizational positions are arranged in a pyramid with each position having its own accountabilities and benefits. Faculty and students are at the bottom of the pyramid and receive the least in terms of privileges. Under the political model, there is dissension among several forces including

students, faculty, administrators, and trustees, with each entity striving to ensure its needs are met (Richardson, 1975).

Kater (2017) stated community colleges operate under a “concept of shared governance” that is “both revered and imprecise” (p. 235). Community colleges are intricate operations with various goals, stakeholders, and traditions, with the ultimate goal of getting all of the parts working together (Burgan, 2006). There is some agreement between board members, administrators, and faculty that college governance seldom lives up to its own ideals of shared power and authority (Burgan, 2006). Educational institutions have become extremely complicated as they attempt to meet the demands of conflicting groups in an ever changing landscape. These groups have different viewpoints, needs, and objectives. Even though there is continual discussion concerning supporting community and student needs, community college rules and procedures generally lean towards safeguarding the staff’s safety and welfare. Cohen et al. (2014) declared the idea that students play a pivotal role in college affairs “has little basis in reality” (p. 111). In recent years there has been more sharing of college oversight between administrators, faculty, and staff. State, regional and local government involvement in educational affairs varies greatly among states and whether the institution operates in a union or nonunion environment (Kisker & Kater, 2012). Faculty at community colleges are the most unionized segment of higher education with 98% of community college faculty being covered by collective bargaining agreements (Rhoades, 1998).

Community colleges must be responsive to local, state, and regional needs (Palmer, 2013). Viewing American community colleges as one large group can be very misleading, since community colleges can range in size from exceedingly small to extremely large. Moreover, how the community college functions and what it offers in terms of programming is greatly impacted

by the authority and role it has within the state and overall governance structure. Palmer (2013) declared community colleges are very vulnerable to policy and funding decisions by state and local governments. Baldrige et al. (1978) commented that due to the “subtle mix of bureaucratic factors, collegial and professional influences, and political dynamics” (p. 70), educational institutions are in a continual state of change, thus, the governing structures must transform and adapt due to these ever changing conditions (Birnbaum, 1992).

Many different forms of college control have existed through the years (Cohen et al., 2014). During the past 30 years there has been an increase in multiple unit college groupings, whereas there has been a decline in independent non-profits. Additionally, most colleges have dissolved any association with local public schools. A board of trustees creates policy for the institution and is responsible for hiring the chief executive officer. The board of trustees may be elected locally or appointed by a governmental agency. The next layer of administration is comprised of vice presidents or deans who address instructional education, business issues, and student affairs. Department chairs are accountable to either the dean or vice president for instruction. Some multiple unit districts operate under a centralized administration with the goal of achieving better economy and standardization (Cohen et al., 2014).

Centralization of functions is difficult since staff member’s desire autonomy and participation in decision making (Cohen et al., 2014). The ideal state is participation from individuals at all levels of the institution, but the power tends to flow towards central administration. This becomes difficult in a time when employee empowerment and involvement is a key principle of administration. In the late 1980s shared governance was mandated to ensure faculty and staff could have input on all decisions. This resulted in multiple documents attempting to sort out responsibilities between faculty associations, staff organizations, local

boards, local and state governments, state boards, and college administrators. State governance varies from state to state based on state law and court rulings (Cohen et al., 2014). In most states publicly supported colleges are controlled by one authority, a board of education (Cohen et al., 2014). Based on information obtained by the Education Commission of the States' (2019) Postsecondary Governance Structures Database, there is some level of state control in all fifty states.

Problem Statement

Higher education has a volatile history of campus crises. Over time the number and intensity of crisis continues to increase, resulting in disastrous consequences for both the institution and stakeholders (Booker, 2011; Gainey, 2009; Garcia, 2015; Merriman, 2008; Sutherland, 2013). In addition to increasing complexity, crises are progressively “transboundary and interconnected” (Boin & Lagadec, 2000, p. 185). Despite location or size, no institution is invulnerable from a potential disaster (Bates, 2015). Colleges may be impacted by a wide variety of crises including natural disasters, health crises, fires, shootings or disease, and college leadership must be prepared (Muffet-Willet, 2010; Murphey, 2019; Sutherland, 2013; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Administrators must be ready to respond to crisis since possible outcomes can include financial loss, damaged reputation, data loss, property damage and injury or death (Booker, 2011; Mitroff et al., 2006). Examples of ineffectual leadership during times of crisis underscore the need to examine crisis leadership and crisis management (Chapman, 2017). Chapman (2017) posited future study should address deficiencies in senior-leadership engagement regarding crisis management.

Leadership actions can significantly impact potential outcomes (Catullo, 2008; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Resuming business operations in challenging conditions, may require adjustments

to the disaster recovery planning process (Chapman, 2017). A principle concern is lack of adequate leadership to ensure business continuity and success (Chapman, 2017). It is essential that institutions assess a leader's abilities to ensure they are suitably prepared to deal with an actual crisis. College presidents must have the ability to adapt their leadership style during a crisis. It is the responsibility of college presidents to manage stakeholder needs and ensure the best possible outcome. Leaders must have the skills to successfully lead the college through the catastrophe while maintaining an exemplary educational experience.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic affected leadership styles and behaviors of Midwestern community college presidents. The study is driven primarily by one question regarding the president's understanding how their leadership style and behaviors had changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

This research had a central research question and four sub-questions:

What are the perceptions of community college presidents of their leadership and decisions during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Research Sub-questions:

1. How did community college presidents describe any changes to their leadership style and behaviors during this crisis?
2. How did community college presidents describe the characteristics of leadership during this crisis?
3. How did community college presidents describe their initial administrative/leadership behaviors or steps they took early during this pandemic?

4. How did community college presidents describe the experience of community college governance during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Research Design

Qualitative research methods were used for this study. According to Dilthey et al. (2002), the hard sciences do not fully capture the numerous ways of knowing. Patton (2002) declared that qualitative methods examine topics in great detail. Creswell (1994) defined qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of information, and conducted in a natural setting” (pp. 1-2). Creswell (1994) stated that qualitative research is concerned with how individuals make “sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world” (p. 145). According to Maykutt and Morehouse (1994), several scholars have recommended using qualitative research due to its ability to better understand human experiences.

Case Study

This research study of the impact of COVID-19 on Midwestern community college president’s leadership styles used a qualitative case study methodology. Case study, asserted Creswell (2003), is one of several accepted research strategies within the realm of qualitative research. Giddings (1924) viewed case study as a research technique that is used to better understand a situation. “Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Based on their definition, case studies “get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)” (Bromley, 1986, p. 23). Yin (2009) defined case study as "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary

phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Yin (2009) furthered that in situations involving questions of how or why, case studies are typically the favored approach. Hamel et al. (1993) asserted case study aligns with the key characteristics of the qualitative method: “describing, understanding, and explaining” (p. 39). Creswell (2013) defined case study as a methodology that “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 96).

This research is an exploratory multiple-case study utilizing qualitative data collection. Creswell (2007) stated, “case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding” (p. 74). Multiple-case study design was chosen due to its ability to find themes or patterns and make comparisons (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Yin (2009) claimed multiple-case study design may be preferable to single-case designs since they offer the ability to make comparisons. Stake (2010) furthered that offering multiple perspectives provides greater insight and understanding compared to single-case studies. Leveraging the strength of capturing multiple perceptions (Stake, 2010), the purpose of this exploratory multiple-case study is to understand any changes in Midwestern community college administrator’s behaviors and leadership styles in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Population

In order to set realistic boundaries, this study focused on Midwestern community college presidents. Midwestern community colleges were defined as public colleges having an enrollment of 10,000 or less, providing on campus housing, and offering associate’s degrees and

vocational training. On campus housing was defined as housing that is operated by the college. Community colleges that were not responsible for on campus housing were excluded from the population. Administrators dealing with campus housing may deal with situations that are significantly different than their counterparts who do not operate on campus housing. Additionally, in one case, two community colleges were governed by one individual. These institutions were excluded since governing two institutions can raise different issues in comparison to governing one institution. Community colleges with enrollments over 10,000, trade schools as well as private, tribal and technical colleges were excluded since their leaders are faced with dissimilar concerns, versus leaders of small community colleges. Some key differences between public and private two year institutions include attendance cost, the number and variety of program offerings, research opportunities and the amount of financial aid offered (Epps, 2021). Private two year institutions may be either nonprofit or for-profit. Additionally, private two year institutions typically have smaller class sizes and often offer fewer athletic programs and extracurricular activities. Likewise, community colleges with larger student populations may have different issues and thus their administrator perspectives and behaviors may be incongruous when compared to their small community college counterparts. Technical colleges or trade schools are also different from community colleges. Although community colleges, like their technical college and trade school counterparts, may provide technical training, community colleges also provide general education courses (Midwest, n.d.). Community colleges also differ from tribal colleges who, in addition to offering academic programming, typically provide courses to perpetuate the Native American language and culture (Molly, 2017). Tribal colleges are critical for communities often facing elevated levels of unemployment and poverty (Molly, 2017). Due to varying characteristics at tribal colleges,

private colleges, technical colleges, trade schools, large community colleges and those not operating on campus student housing, they were excluded from the population because of their unique characteristics. The population was limited to enrollment of 10,000 or less to examine smaller community colleges. Their leadership may face dissimilar challenges compared to small community colleges operating on campus student housing. There were a total of 32 community colleges in the population in the Midwestern region.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling was used in this research. Purposeful sampling entails identifying and selecting individuals who have significant knowledge regarding a particular phenomenon, are willing and able to participate, and possess some other characteristic that is important to the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Patton, 2002). The concept of purposeful sampling is to focus on individuals who are best able to help with the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Patton, 2002).

Purposeful sampling limits the population size and also limits the generalizability of the study findings (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2003) stated, “A purposive selection of participants represents a key decision point in a case study” (p. 118). The community college where the researcher was employed was excluded from the sample.

Different purposeful sampling strategies can be utilized (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This research study used typical case sampling which focuses on what is average or customary (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The intent is “to describe and illustrate what is typical” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), “Searching deliberately for...typical cases serves to increase confidence in conclusions” (p. 28). The purpose is not to generalize about all participants’ experiences (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was qualitative, semi-structured interviews since they offered the researcher the opportunity to obtain a better understanding of the participants' experiences (Kahlke, 2014). According to Yin (2009), "One of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview" (p. 84). Using semi-structured interviews is common since it allows interviewers the flexibility to explore impromptu topics raised by the interviewee (Kahlke, 2014; Ryan et al., 2009). Additionally, interviews provide "people's knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and feelings; as well as detailed descriptions of people's actions, behaviors, activities, and interpersonal interactions" (Roberts, 2004, p. 111). The interviews were conducted via Zoom videoconferencing. This facilitated the social interaction that Ryan et al. (2009) declared is vital to the interview's success. It enabled the interviewer the ability to see all the non-verbal cues which also communicate meaning (Ryan et al., 2009). An interview protocol assisted in the interview process (Appendix A).

In addition to interview data, artifacts were utilized to help confirm interview data and interpretations, a critical component of triangulation (Stake, 1995). For the purpose of collecting community college president communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, artifacts were collected from public COVID-19 sites or newsletters and letters from the president. Yin (2018) asserted artifacts are useful because they can "corroborate and augment evidence" (p. 115). Artifacts were collected for the timeframe between March 2020 and December 2021. An artifact collection and analysis protocol was used to assist in this process (Appendix B).

The study lasted 17 weeks. Study participants were engaged for approximately eight weeks. Participant responses are confidential and were stored for analysis purposes. No

participant or college names were used. Participants were given pseudonyms and community colleges names were not included.

Data Analysis

All data analysis was conducted by the researcher using an inductive approach to find themes and patterns (Yin, 2018). Analyzing the interviews and artifacts provided useful information regarding crisis leadership. All interviews were recorded with the interviewee's permission enabling the researcher to obtain a verbatim transcript. The transcript was shared with the interviewee for review and member checking (Ryan et al., 2009). The interviewee had the opportunity to clarify or change any comments they previously made (Ryan et al., 2009).

The raw data were examined looking for a variety of potential explanations (Stake, 1995). All individual responses were sorted by research question and were grouped by similarity. Meaning making occurred by using both "direct interpretation" and "aggregation of instances" (Stake, 1995, p. 74). The responses were analyzed, and themes identified through the use of coding. Content analysis was used to assist in the identification of themes and patterns. In addition to interview data, artifacts were utilized to help confirm interview data and interpretations, a vital component of triangulation. Triangulation occurred through the member checking process. A narrative summary was created to describe the major findings.

A concern for qualitative research is dependability. Research must utilize appropriate qualitative research practices (Anney, 2014). Dependability can be demonstrated using an audit trail which describes the research steps prior to conducting the research. Thorough notes were kept during the research process to ensure complete transparency (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Purposeful sampling limits the generalizability of the study findings (Creswell, 1994). Stake (1995) declared with qualitative inquiry, “New puzzles are produced more frequently than solutions to old ones” (p. 45). Stake (1995) furthered

Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding...The misunderstanding will occur because the researcher-interpreters are unaware of their own intellectual shortcomings and because of the weaknesses in methods that fail to purge misinterpretations (p. 45).

Triangulation, according to Stake (1995) serves as a validation tool that is “approximate in purpose” to the quantitative fields (p.45). However, Stake (1995) stated concerns about lack of “widely agreed-upon protocols” for these tools (p. 45).

This study is reliant on self-reported information gathered from participant interviews. The ability to obtain meaningful data can be influenced by the type of technology utilized. Archibald et al. (2019) declared the type of technology used may impact the researcher’s ability to develop rapport as well as the participants’ responses. Obtaining access to presidents was challenging due to their hectic schedules. The study was limited due to conditions related to time and access regarding participants.

Delimitations

Community colleges having student enrollment exceeding 10,000 students were specifically excluded from the population. In addition, private, technical, trade and tribal colleges were not included in the population. Public community colleges not operating on campus housing were excluded. In one case an administrator was responsible for two community colleges. These community colleges were excluded due to differing leadership issues and

concerns compared to administrators leading an individual institution. Finally, the community college where the researcher was employed as an adjunct was excluded from the population.

Significance of the Study

History has demonstrated that no educational institution is safe from a crisis (Bates, 2015). Not only are college campus crises becoming more prevalent, but they are also growing in intensity and sophistication (Gainey, 2009; Sutherland, 2013). College campus crises have often resulted in dire consequences for both the college and its stakeholders (Booker, 2011; Garcia, 2015; Merriman, 2008; Sutherland, 2013). The UT Tower shooting ushered in an era of school shootings in 1966 that left 16 dead and 31 injured (Badi & Pasley, 2019; Ponder, 2018). The tornadoes that ravaged Alabama in 2011 left 200 dead and several wounded (Simmons & Sutter, 2012). As a result of an arson fire in 1998 at Murray State University in Kentucky, 16 students died, several were injured, and more than 100 had to be relocated (Meilman, 2006). The Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 resulted in 33 killed and 15 wounded (Hauser & O'Connor, 2007). Hurricane Katrina in 2005 caused \$100 billion in damage in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama and the closure of many educational facilities (Lipka, 2005).

College leadership must be ready to respond to a wide variety of crises ranging from financial collapse, natural disasters, health crises, and terrorism (Muffet-Willet, 2010; Murphey, 2019; Sutherland, 2013; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Crisis management has become even more challenging due to interconnectivity between systems, organizations, and countries (Coombs, 2012). Additionally, with globalization, and modernization, leadership must respond quickly, thus a crises plan must be established prior to the crisis event (Zdziarski et al., 2007).

Mann (2007) declared that many colleges developed crisis management plans as a result of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007. The majority of research

has been focused on studying how educational institutions responded to crises (Garcia, 2015). Although crisis response is important, minimal study has been conducted regarding how a leader should respond during a crisis (Dolan, 2006; Sweeny, 2008). How a leader responds to a crisis can significantly impact the potential outcome (Catullo, 2008; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Competent leadership increases the chance of a more favorable outcome (Muffet-Willet, 2010). Leaders may need to utilize a different leadership style during a crisis (Fiedler, 1964). Some otherwise successful leaders may not be successful in crisis situations (Boin, 2009). This research provides invaluable information regarding crisis leadership behaviors and decisions which can be utilized to create best practices for crisis leadership.

Definitions

For purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used:

Campus crisis: can be precipitated by a range of events that are unexpected, have significant consequences to individuals and the community, and may easily overwhelm the existing structures in place to support students, faculty, staff, and the greater university community. By definition...a crisis brings with it a confrontation with danger that may have physical, psychological, and economic consequences for the individual and the community. The precipitating event may occur in the greater community or on campus, but the rippling effects may be felt across the boundaries of both and extend to family members and alumni across the country and the world (Flynn & Sharma, 2016, p. 77).

Community college: “any not-for-profit institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 5).

Community college governance: “the process or art with which scholars, students, teachers, administrators, and trustees associated together in a college...establish and carry out the rules and regulations that minimize conflict, facilitate their collaboration, and preserve essential individual freedom” (Corson, 1960, pp. 12-13).

Crisis leadership: “is a process. It is the ability to demonstrate a core set of behaviors” such as sense making, managing the change process, taking risks, and fostering organizational agility to enhance the firm’s success during crisis (James & Wooten, 2005, p. 150).

Crisis management: systematic approach taken by an institution which includes all stakeholders, to prevent a crisis from occurring or to effectively manage a crisis should one occur (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Good communication skills: “are defined as the skills that help us speak, listen, observe and empathize with others by using verbal and non-verbal communication in an effective manner. Verbal communication skills include the way you use written or spoken words while non-verbal communication refers to your body language, facial expressions sorts of nonverbal signals” (Tiwari, 2022, para. 3).

Leadership characteristics: “the knowledge, skills, and abilities and behaviors; as well as qualities necessary for success in a position” (as cited in Kokemuller, 2022, para. 4).

Leadership styles: “pattern of attitudes that leaders hold and behaviors they exhibit” (Anderson & Sun, 2017, p. 76).

Stakeholders: “Individuals, offices, organizations, and agencies, both internal and external to the institution, which affect or may be affected by a crisis” (Zdziarski, 2001, p. 5).

Summary

Educational crises are occurring more frequently and with greater intensity. Educational leadership must be prepared to respond to a wide variety of potential crises. During times of crisis, time is of the essence, and the organization's viability may be in question. During the COVID-19 crisis, community college leaders guided their colleges through the pandemic. Understanding the leadership styles and behaviors that occurred during the crisis, can inform the development of best practices for future crises. This research explored how the COVID-19 pandemic affected leadership styles and behaviors based on the perceived experiences of Midwestern community college presidents.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

Few Americans realized in December 2019 that an invisible pathogen would soon create world-wide havoc (Li et al., 2020). On December 31, 2019, China confirmed several cases of pneumonia with an unspecified cause in Wuhan (Muccari & Chow, 2020). Days later, on January 7, 2020, this pathogen was identified as a new coronavirus, but would not receive its official name COVID-19 until the following month (Muccari & Chow, 2020). By the middle of January China reported its first coronavirus related death, and soon cases were confirmed in Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and the United States (Muccari & Chow, 2020). Approximately 30 days later, 67,000 people were infected in 28 countries (Young et al., 2020). People from around the world caught glimpses of Princess Cruise ship passengers who were quarantined in Yokohama (Young et al., 2020).

The crisis was officially classified a pandemic on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Muccari & Chow, 2020). Famous actors Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson tested positive making everyone realize no one was immune (Muccari & Chow, 2020). The United States (U.S.) instituted restrictions on foreign travelers in 26 European countries (Muccari & Chow, 2020). America's favorite pastime, Major League Baseball (MLB), suspended spring training and the State National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball tournament was cancelled (Muccari & Chow, 2020). Schools started closing across the United States (Muccari & Chow, 2020). The United States activated the National Guard to assist the hardest hit states of California, Washington, and New York (Muccari & Chow, 2020). On April 20, 2020, West Texas Intermediate Crude (WTI) oil went into negative territory for the first time ever as traders were forced to pay buyers \$36.30 per barrel to take oil off their hands (Ho, 2020).

Beginning as a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic amassed into a health, social, economic, and political crisis (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). The COVID 19 crisis seemingly came from nowhere and within a matter of months has had monumental health, economic, and psychological impacts world-wide.

The COVID-19 crisis left many parents wondering how long schools would be closed. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in mid-April, stated that 192 countries had closed all schools and universities which impacted 90 % of the world's students, or 1.6 billion individuals (Psacharopoulos et al., 2020). Crises such as COVID-19 are pivotal events that can forever change an institution's trajectory (Klann, 2003). Research studies have shown a relationship between institutional quality and community college leader effectiveness (Broome, 2003; Hua, 2005; Powell, 2004). An institution's ability to effectively respond to these challenges is at least partially dependent upon their leadership. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the perceptions of Midwestern community college presidents regarding their leadership and decisions during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The literature research on crisis management and crisis leadership emphasized the corporate, political and military fields (Dolan, 2006; Jacobsen, 2010; Sweeny, 2008). Understanding how to respond to a crisis is critical, but little study has been done regarding how leaders should respond in a crisis (Dolan, 2006; Sweeny, 2008). The institution's future success and viability is dependent upon effective leadership (Yukl, 2002).

Institutions have a greater likelihood of achieving a more favorable outcome with effective leadership at the helm (Muffet-Willet, 2010). Understanding leaders' perceptions

during a crisis, particularly whether they changed their behaviors or leadership styles during a crisis, may provide critical insight regarding effective crisis leadership (Bishop, 2013).

This literature review begins with a historical review of leadership with the goal of understanding the competencies associated with effective leaders. Crisis literature related to crisis definitions, crisis leadership in higher education, crisis phases, and crisis leadership styles will be reviewed to enhance understanding of crisis management and crisis leadership. The chapter will end with a discussion of the conceptual framework.

Leadership Defined

Despite substantial research there is still comparatively little known about leadership (Birnbaum, 1992). Bennis (1959) furthered, “Of all the hazy and confounding areas in social psychology, leadership theory undoubtedly contends for top nomination. And, ironically, probably more has been written and less known about leadership than about any other topic in the behavioral sciences” (p. 259). Stogdill (1974) commented, “There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it” (p. 7).

Gardner’s (1995) definition stated, “Leadership [is] a process that occurs within the minds of individuals who live in a culture – a process that entails the capacity to create stories, to understand and evaluate these stories, and to appreciate the struggle among stories” (p. 22). Northouse (2007) viewed leadership as several components that are central to the leadership experience. The components consist of understanding that (a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in a group context, and (d) leadership involves goal attainment (Northouse, 2007). Hockaday and Puyear (2000) declared future community college leaders must be “holding the goals of the institution in one hand and the people of the institution in the other and somehow bringing these two together in a common

good” (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000, p. 3). Greenleaf (1977) declared leadership is “going out ahead to show the way-is available to everyone in the institution who has the competence, values, and temperament for it, from the chairman to the least skilled individual” (p. 96).

Although leadership has been defined in many ways, the different definitions share four common elements (Northouse, 2007). Leadership is a process, involves influence and common goals, and occurs in groups (Northouse, 2007).

Effective Leadership

Prior to World War II, leadership research focused on characteristics distinguishing effective leaders from ineffective leaders (Lord et al., 2017). Although some research still uses the term characteristic (Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Clifford & Cavanagh, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Levinson & Rosenthal, 1986), there has been a shift towards using the term competency (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Saltz, 2017; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997; Wooten & James, 2008). Leadership definitions in this timeframe prior to World War II emphasized power and control (Turner, 1998). For example, Mumford asserted that leadership is “the preeminence of one or a few individuals in a group in the process of control of societal phenomena” (as cited in Stogdill, 1974, p. 8). Blackmar (1911) stated, leadership is a “centralization of effort in one person as an expression of the power of all” (p. 626). In what many have referred to as the Great Man approach to leadership, Bogardus (1934) researched the 100 most effective leaders and their achievements. Bogardus’ (1934) work was unique for its time since he maintained that everyone had leadership and followership characteristics.

Researchers began questioning the traits leadership approach by the 1940s and began advocating for new methods (Lord et al., 2017). Murphy (1941) asserted, “Leadership study calls for a situational approach” (p. 641). Research conducted at Ohio State University and the

University of Michigan did not focus on leadership characteristics, but examined leadership behaviors (Vroom & Jago, 2007). This behavioral research was a significant step towards acknowledging the importance of context and its impact on leadership (Vroom & Jago, 2007).

Following World War II, leadership research advanced in three phases with the initial phase occurring between 1948 and 1961 (Lord et al., 2017). Based on his research, Jenkins (1947) concluded that “no single trait or group of characteristics...sets off the leader from the members of the group” (pp.74-75). Jenkins’ (1947) work asserted that effective leadership characteristics were situationally-based, and many characteristics were shared with followers. Stogdill (1948) proclaimed that although individual characteristics are important, primarily situational factors dictate whether an individual is viewed as a successful leader. Stogdill and Shartle’s (1948) ground-breaking research with the Ohio State leadership program indicated a shift from focusing on leadership traits to instead focusing on understanding leadership behaviors. Studies in this time period highlighted that everyone could perform leadership tasks (Lord et al., 2017). Cleven and Fiedler (1956) discovered greater group effectiveness was correlated with members’ perception of their best and least liked coworker on two dimensions (as cited in Lord et al., 2017). This led the way for Fiedler’s (1964) Contingency Model and Least Preferred Coworker leadership model. Phase one ended as the focus changed from identification of effective leadership characteristics, towards better understanding of effective leadership behaviors (Lord et al., 2017). In the 1960s leadership started to be defined more in terms of behavior and less in terms of power or influence (Turner, 1998).

The second phase of leadership research, beginning in the 1970s, was based on cognitive explanations (Lord et al., 2017). Researchers examined group communication, task characteristics, and emotional models of group members (Lord et al., 2017). A moral component

was introduced when Zaleznik (1989) defined effective leadership as “a compact that binds those who lead and those who follow into the same moral, intellectual, and emotional commitment” (p. 15). The concept there is not one best way to lead, led to the development of many contingency theories such as Fiedler’s Contingency Theory (1964). Under Fiedler’s Contingency Theory (1964), the effectiveness of the group is dependent upon a suitable leadership style and the situation at hand. In the 1970s researchers started using meta-analysis to measure leadership behaviors more accurately in an effort to better understand the relationship between personality and leadership (Lord et al., 2017).

Starting in the 1980s, the third phase resulted in the development of transformational and charismatic leadership (Lord et al., 2017). Bass (1985) included charisma in his transactional and transformational theories of leadership since a charismatic, transformational leader can be immensely powerful. Work by Hater and Bass (1988) demonstrated that charisma was a key component of effective leaders. Under transformational leadership theory, extraordinary results are the result of fresh approaches to thinking and the kindling of followers’ values (Lord et al., 2017). In the 1990s Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, which concentrated on the relationship between the leader and the follower, was very pervasive (Lord et al., 2017). LMX theory contends there is a distinctive relationship quality between a leader and follower which can then help anticipate outcomes (Lord et al., 2017). LMX theory was also unique since the focus was on both the leader and the follower, not simply the leader (Lord et al., 2017).

Many studies focused on issues of gender and leadership, particularly as the number of women entering the workforce started increasing in the 1970s and 1980s (Lord et al., 2017). Studies reviewed leadership styles, bias, and effectiveness based on gender (Lord et al., 2017). Researchers discovered leaders whose roles were within cultural norms were more effective

compared to those with roles that were not socially approved (Lord et al., 2017). This ultimately led to the development of role congruity theory whereby women are more vulnerable operating in leadership positions that were not culturally approved (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

The late 1990's ushered in a new era called positive psychology (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Instead of focusing on mental illness the focus shifted towards "making people's lives more productive and worthwhile, and actualizing human potential" (Luthans & Youssef, 2004, p. 151). The beginning of positive psychology is often attributed to Martin Seligman (Al Taher, 2021). Although Seligman is often referred to as the father of positive psychology, many have contributed to this movement (Al Taher, 2021). The concepts of positivity and strengths-based management have been applied in the workplace (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Due to positivity, two different movements have occurred. First, based primarily on the work conducted at the University of Michigan, it was discovered that positivity can increase "organizational survival and effectiveness in times of crisis and adverse conditions" (Luthans & Youssef, 2004, p. 152). "Employees who are more hopeful, optimistic, efficacious, and resilient may be more likely to 'weather the storm' of the type of dynamic, global environmental contexts confronting most organizations today better than their counterparts with lower PsyCap" (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 569).

Second, positive organizational behavior (POB) can be "measured, developed and managed for performance" at work (Luthans & Youssef, 2004, p. 152). POB is comprised of four elements which include self-efficacy/confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency. When combined these four elements are called positive psychological capital. Instead of focusing on personality traits, POB focuses on variables that can be cultivated within individuals by using proactive management and interventions.

Effective Leadership Competencies

This research examined leadership characteristics. Both leadership characteristics and leadership competencies were referenced in different research studies. Northwestern University's Human Resources Department defined competencies as "the knowledge, skills and abilities and behaviors; as well as qualities necessary for success in a position" (as cited in Kokemuller, 2022, para. 4). In some research, leadership competencies and leadership characteristics were used interchangeably (Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hollenbeck et al., 2006; Jantti & Greenhalgh, 2012; Supamane et al., 2011), while other research studies only referenced the term characteristics (Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Clifford & Cavanagh, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Levinson & Rosenthal, 1986). In fact, in Jantti and Greenhalgh's (2012) research, their leadership competency definition used the word characteristic. They defined leadership competencies as "measurable characteristics related to success in the workplace" (Jantti & Greenhalgh, 2012, p. 421). For purposes of this research, leadership characteristics has the same definition that Northwestern University's Human Resources Department used for competencies which is "the knowledge, skills, and abilities and behaviors; as well as qualities necessary for success in a position" (as cited in Kokemuller, 2022, para. 4).

Through the years assorted studies have attempted to identify competencies that are associated with effective leadership. Reviewing these study results, common themes have emerged and have been assembled into three separate groups: personal, leadership and communication competencies.

Personal Competencies

Individual competencies that facilitate successful leadership are called personal competencies. Personal competencies for effective leaders include emotional intelligence, calm

demeanor, positivity, empathy, change agent, vision, ethics, adaptability, resiliency, confidence and collaboration. Other personal competencies that were only mentioned by one study included humor (Hammons & Keller, 1990) and trust (Plinske, 2008).

Emotional Intelligence

Several studies have underscored the importance of effective leaders having high emotional intelligence to promote the optimal environment when interacting with others (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 2018; Goleman, 1998; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997; Kezar et al., 2006; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997). Emotions are immensely powerful tools that can be used to persuade and motivate others, and many feel they are the “heart of leadership” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 84). According to Cherry (2020), there are four different levels of emotional intelligence. These levels are emotional perception, the capability to intellectualize using emotions, the capability to understand emotions and finally the ability to manage those emotions (Cherry, 2020). Those leaders with high emotional intelligence are very self-aware and have a good understanding of what impacts their own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Cherry, 2020). Through self-awareness and understanding of their own emotions and feelings, these leaders have greater insight regarding the feelings and emotions of others (Cherry, 2020).

Calm Demeanor

In addition to emotional intelligence, Brassey and Kruyt (2020) asserted maintaining “a calm state of mind” (para. 11) helps keep leaders focused, avoids unnecessary employee panic and increases organizational productivity (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020; Kezar et al., 2006; Rowe, 2008). It is essential leaders learn to become “comfortable with discomfort” and reframe this situation as an opportunity (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 11). Employees pick up on the

emotions of others so the leader's emotions impact others (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). Reframing a situation and/or harnessing a stressful situation can help a leader's personal health and can also result in organizational productivity improvement (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020).

Positivity

Positivity, according to University of Michigan research studies, improves a company's chances for successfully surviving a crisis (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). The ability to be optimistic in challenging times is an important competency (Hammons & Keller, 1990). Having a balanced outlook during a crisis is difficult since individuals tend to focus on institutional threats, the "negative explanations," instead of positive outcomes such as potential opportunities (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 38). During a crisis leaders should focus on reframing their perspective and looking for alternative solutions (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). Leaders should utilize "integrative awareness" which is the awareness of "the changing reality" combined with how the leader is "responding emotionally and physically" (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 7). Leaders should focus on changing their perception. Instead of viewing challenges as "roadblocks" they should be seen as "problems to be solved, and even learned from" (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 7). Brassey and Kruyt (2020) asserted, "When the path ahead is uncertain, people...want someone with a positive vision" (para 3).

Empathy

Empathy is an emotion referring "to the ability to imagine oneself in another's situation; experience the emotions, ideas, or opinions of that person; and take action to help reduce pain and suffering for the other person" (Pallapa, 2021, para. 59). Van Bommel (2021) declared "empathy is a must-have in today's workplace"... "especially in times of crisis" (para. 2). Empathetic leaders create empowered, happier employees with lower stress levels leading to

lower organizational attrition (Pallapa, 2021). Further, empathetic leaders create a feeling of trust fostering innovation and creativity (Pallapa, 2021). According to research conducted by Catalyst, empathy fostered employee engagement and inclusion (Van Bommel, 2021). Due to uncertainty, isolation, and illness related to the pandemic, employees are feeling stressed. Thus, employers are seeing increased employee turnover which many have referred to as the Great Resignation. Employees, according to Catalyst research, desire leaders who acknowledge employees' adversities and "think people, not just programs" (Van Bommel, 2021, para. 5). According to Van Bommel (2021), "cultivating empathic leadership is an effective strategy to respond to crisis with the heart and authenticity that many employees crave" (para. 5). Employees who have empathetic leaders feel more empowered and are less likely to leave the organization (Pallapa, 2021).

Change Agent

According to the AACC (2018) study, effective leaders should "embrace a change management philosophy" (p. 75). Championing change is an important leadership competency since greater focus is being placed on the significance of entrepreneurialism (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Hood, 1997; Kezar et al., 2006). Lee (2015) declared "Leaders are naturally agents of change because society is constantly changing" (para. 1). Change agents emphasize innovation and beneficial change and skillfully turn past failures into future successes (Lee, 2015).

Vision

Further, effective leaders must have vision. They must help all stakeholders understand the connections between their everyday actions and the institution's vision (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Plinske, 2008; Rowe, 2008). Through the use of symbols, rituals, and emotional appeals, effective leaders can more effectively communicate their vision (Kezar et al., 2006). In addition

to leading the process for communicating the institution's values, effective leaders model those values (Desjardins & Huff, 2001).

Ethics

It is essential to have leaders who are ethical (AACC, 2018; Kezar et al., 2006; Rowe, 2008). Serving as role models, ethical leaders show their commitment to doing the right thing “through their words and actions” (What is ethical, 2021, para. 6). They clearly convey the “recognized principles and values – both inside and outside of the office” (What is ethical, 2021, para. 5). These actions highlight the expectations for others' behaviors (What is ethical, 2021).

Adaptability

Adaptability is a key competency for effective leadership (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997). Adaptive competency, according to Townsend and Bassoppo-Moyo (1997), is the “ability to anticipate and accommodate changes (for example, technical changes) important to the profession” (para. 48). Due to changing community college environments, Pierce and Pedersen (1997) declared community college presidents have “set a standard for personal adaptability” due to how they have handled the continuously changing community college environment resulting from changing demographics (p. 15). Services such as day care centers and developmental studies were created to assist student needs largely due to community college leaders (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997). In addition, the presidents have been proponents of “more participatory and team-based campus governance” which is additional evidence of their willingness to adapt (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997, p. 16).

Resiliency

Different studies have discussed the criticality of resilient leadership (Avey, 2011; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Wooten & James, 2008). According to Luthans and Youssef (2004),

resiliency is “the capacity to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, failure, or even positive but seemingly overwhelming changes” (p. 154). When businesses respond to crises, they typically focus on returning the institution to its “precrisis state” (Wooten & James, 2008, p.369). Brockner and James (2008) declared institutions should instead use the crises as an opportunity for organizational change.

Collaboration

An essential leadership competency is collaboration (AACC, 2018; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000). In the past, effective college leaders may have been able to operate independently (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000). If those days ever existed, they have since past (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000). To be successful college leaders must develop “mutually beneficial” (AACC, 2018, p. 90) partnerships both within and outside the organization (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000).

Confidence

Successful leaders also have confidence (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Powell, 2004). Hockaday and Puyear (2000) asserted effective leaders “exude confidence that the directions in which he or she is leading the organization will serve it well” (p. 2). Granted, every leader will have their moments of doubt, however publicly displaying this doubt “does not serve the leader or the college well” (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000, pp. 2-3). A leader does not always make the best decision, similarly, being overly self-assured can also send the wrong message (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000).

Leadership Competencies

There are competencies that define great leadership. In the leadership category, there are several common themes for effective leadership competencies such as: influence, intellectual capabilities, empowerment, admitting your mistakes and advocating for professional

development at all institutional levels. Another leadership competency, mentioned only by the American Association of Community Colleges (2018), was data driven decision making.

Influence

An important aspect of effective leadership, declared Hammons and Keller (1990), is the ability to develop and maintain peer networks and to garner support for important college issues (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001). Moreover, asserted Desjardins and Huff (2001), effective leaders need to think strategically about “spheres of influence” (p. 110) and be careful not to overlook individuals with “non-official power” (p. 110). Effective leaders must have the ability to develop persuasive appeals, and recognize when their influence or direction is required (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997).

Intellectual Capabilities

Since competent leaders routinely face ambiguous situations with limited information they must avoid simplistic thinking (Birnbaum, 1992). Research has demonstrated that effective leaders with more complex capabilities made fewer errors, were less impacted by overload, and had a higher tolerance for uncertainty (Van der Veer, 1991). Decision making, problem solving, and analytical capabilities are also essential for high performing leaders (AACC, 2018; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Harrison, 2016; Hood, 1997; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997).

Empowerment

Successful leaders should actively encourage their employees to take on leadership roles (AACC, 2018; Birnbaum, 1992; Desjardins & Huff, 2001). Empowerment has gained importance as more successful leaders are utilizing team and shared leadership models (Hammons & Keller, 1990; Kezar et al., 2006). Leaders who empower their employees can positively impact their “employee[s]’ satisfaction, productivity and engagement” (Hirsch, 2020,

para. 3). Empowered employees have a greater tendency to provide innovative solutions and offer additional workplace support (Hirsch, 2020).

Admit Your Mistakes

Successful leaders realize mistakes will be made (Hansen, 2021; Rowe, 2008). Instead of viewing these mistakes as setbacks they see them as learning opportunities (Hansen, 2021). By admitting your mistakes, you demonstrate to your stakeholders you are someone who can be trusted. Further, these mistakes help leaders deal with harsh choices in the future. “We learn more from failure than success” (Hansen, 2021, para.4). When we fail, we have the opportunity to step back and examine the situation so we can hopefully emerge better as a result (Hansen, 2021).

Professional Development

Institutional leaders link professional employee development to the college’s strategic direction and student outcomes and therefore promote professional development for employees at all levels (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001). Effective leaders encourage activities that create cohesive, team environments (AACC, 2018; Plinske, 2008). Steve Hawter, vice president of learning and development at The Learning Experience, asserted professional development “ensures employees know of the company’s investment in them and demonstrates the company’s real concern” for them (as cited in Meyer, 2022, para. 26).

Communication Competencies

Communication is of critical import for leaders. In the communication category, three effective leadership competencies emerged: effective communication, listening skills, and cultural understanding.

Effective Communication

Whether speaking or writing leaders should always project confidence and poise (AACC, 2018). Successful leaders effectively communicate with all levels of the organization to ensure everyone has the information required to make good choices (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997; Powell, 2004). All communications must present a professional image and be consistent across all communication mediums (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001).

Listening Skills

Effective leaders must be interested in what people say, actively listen, and have an open mind (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Harrison, 2016; Plinske, 2008). In the area of communication, listening respectfully was acknowledged by 90% of Institutional Leadership Project (ILP) participants (Birnbaum, 1992). Since successful leaders are often faced with complex issues, it is essential they use their active listening skills and avoid offering solutions before all the information has been presented (AACC, 2018).

Cultural Understanding

Cultural understanding is essential for leaders competing in a global economy (AACC, 2018). Effective leaders must not only understand the cultural components of leadership, particularly the import of values, traditions, and symbols, but should also actively promote cultural pluralism throughout their institution (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Kezar et al., 2006). In addition, competent leaders must recognize the role they play in creating the culture of their organization (Kezar et al., 2006).

Summary

Many studies have attempted to identify the competencies of an effective leader. Common themes have evolved in terms of personal, leadership and communication competencies. Kezar et al. (2006) declared emotions are an essential aspect of leadership. These high performing leaders skillfully utilize emotions to persuade and motivate their followers (AACC, 2018; Goleman, 1998; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997; Kezar et al., 2006; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997). Moreover, these competent leaders skillfully communicate institutional values by personally demonstrating them to their followers (Desjardins & Huff, 2001).

In addition to being agents of change, effective leaders think strategically and have exceptional communications skills (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997). They utilize extensive personal networks to help gain essential institutional support (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001). Effective leaders have complex thinking capabilities and high tolerance for uncertainty (Van der Veer, 1991). They have exceptional decision making, problem solving and analytical capabilities (AACC, 2018; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Harrison, 2016; Hood, 1997; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997).

Successful leaders utilize delegation and encourage professional employee development at all institutional levels to facilitate dedicated, cohesive team environments (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001, Plinske, 2008). Effective leaders recognize the import of institutional values, traditions and symbols (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Kezar et al., 2006). They clearly recognize the key role they play in developing the institutional culture (Kezar et al., 2006).

Crisis Defined

When examining crisis leadership, it is important to understand how a crisis is defined. According to Lerbinger (2011), reviewing crisis definitions assists leaders in crisis recognition. Among disciplines, there is not a universally accepted definition of crisis management, and the term is often misused (Barton, 1993; Coombs, 2012; Hermann, 1972; Levitt, 1997; Mitroff, 2004; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Hermann (1972) defined crises as “a situation that threatens high priority goals of the decision-making unit, restricts the amount of time available for response before the decision is transformed and surprises the members of the decision-making unit by its occurrence” (p. 13). Lerner et al. (2003) stated crisis is “a traumatic event that seriously disrupts our coping and problem-solving abilities. It is typically unpredicted, volatile in nature and may even threaten our survival” (p. 11). Seeger et al. (2003) viewed a crisis as “a specific, unexpected and non-routine organizationally based event or series of events which creates high levels of uncertainty and threat or perceived threat to an organization’s high priority goals” (p. 7). Barton (1993) posited “a crisis is a major, unpredictable event that has potentially negative results. The event and its aftermath may significantly damage an organization and its employees, products, services, financial condition, and reputation” (p. 2). Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) defined a crisis as “a disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core” (p. 12). Campbell (1999) referred to a crisis as “a serious, negative event that has detrimental effects on an organization” (p. 11). Although crisis is defined several ways, there are some similarities.

Definition Similarities

The definitions listed above contain similar elements. A few of the definitions indicated that crises were unexpected or a surprise (Hermann, 1972; Lerner et al. 2003; Seeger et al.,

2003). Two definitions stated crises could impact high priority goals and cause institutional disruptions (Hermann, 1972; Lerner et al., 2003; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Seeger et al., 2003). Campbell (1999), Barton (1993) and Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) all referenced the potential harmful impacts a crisis can pose, however, Barton's (1993) definition explicitly named those potentially harmed. Beyond these similarities, the definitions started to diverge. Hermann's (1972) definition mentioned the short time window for decision making while Lerner et al.'s (2003) definition discussed potential trauma, and Seeger et al.'s (2003) definition referenced crisis uncertainty.

Common Elements

Although there are numerous crisis definitions, many definitions, asserted Lerbinger (2011), typically contain a blend of a few common elements (Billings et al., 1980; Hermann, 1963; Seeger et al., 2003):

1. Crises have a small likelihood of occurrence but may have significant impact and may even be life threatening (Barton, 1993; Billings et al., 1980; Hermann, 1963; Seeger et al., 2003).
2. Decisions must be made quickly, in a situation that is abrupt, unforeseen and unwelcome (Billings et al., 1980; Hermann, 1963; Seeger et al., 2003).
3. In terms of crisis, both the cause and method of resolution is often unclear and confusing (Billings et al., 1980; Hermann, 1963; Seeger et al., 2003).
4. Usually, in a crisis the incident will further deteriorate without additional action, it impedes organizational goals and may even endanger organizational viability (Billings et al., 1980; Hermann, 1963; Seeger et al., 2003).

Zdziarski et al. (2007) declared that how an institution defines a crisis will greatly influence the crisis management planning process. It will impact when the crisis plan is enacted, who is included on the team, as well as the procedures and processes used. It is essential that the term crisis be defined in a manner that highlights features that are crucial to the institution (Zdziarski et al., 2007). For purposes of this study, the following definition was used:

A crisis on campus can be precipitated by a range of events that are unexpected, have significant consequences to individuals and the community, and may easily overwhelm the existing structures in place to support students, faculty, staff, and the greater university community. By definition...a crisis brings with it a confrontation with danger that may have physical, psychological, and economic consequences for the individual and the community. The precipitating event may occur in the greater community or on campus, but the rippling effects may be felt across the boundaries of both and extend to family members and alumni across the country and the world (Flynn & Sharma, 2016).

This definition was chosen since it reflects the interconnectivity between community and campuses and recognizes the psychological and/or mental health aspects associated with the crisis.

Crisis Leadership

Pepper et al. (2010) asserted “the ‘modern’ systematic study of crisis preparation, management, and response grew from the study of Johnson and Johnson’s (J and J) response to cyanide being found in Tylenol in 1982.” (p. xiv). J and J quickly removed all products from the shelves prioritizing customer safety versus corporate profitability. J and J did not stop there; they took it a step further and ensured their product was tamper proof (Albrecht, 1996). J and J’s actions revolutionized the consumer industry making safety packaging the industry norm. They

turned a negative situation into an opportunity and became the gold standard for crisis leadership (Albrecht, 1996; Mitroff et al., 2006).

The situation, however, could have turned out differently if J and J founder Robert Wood Johnson had not created a credo of the company's guiding principles in 1943 (Blythe & Noakes-Fry, 2014). The credo stated J and J's priorities, in order of importance, was to their customers, employees, communities, and shareholders (Blythe & Noakes-Fry, 2014). James Burke, the CEO of J and J during the crisis, wanted to immediately remove Tylenol from the shelves (Blythe & Noakes-Fry, 2014). Several entities, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and even Burke's senior management team were vehemently against this idea (Blythe & Noakes-Fry, 2014). There was concern this action would further embolden criminals as well as negatively impact both the company and its shareholders (Blythe & Noakes-Fry, 2014). In the end, Burke relied on the credo which clearly stated the company's first priority was to its customers (Blythe & Noakes-Fry, 2014).

As demonstrated with the Tylenol poisonings, a close connection exists between leadership and crisis (Boin & 't Hart, 2003; Schoenberg, 2005). During a crisis, individuals naturally look to leaders for answers (Boin & 't Hart, 2003). If the crisis is successfully handled, the leaders are endorsed as heroes. However, when the opposite occurs, leadership is often blamed. Due to the difficulty and challenges, many leaders view their crisis leadership experiences as pivotal points in their career (Boin & 't Hart, 2003). Rollo and Zdziarski (2007) declared there is a difference "between managing crisis situations and simply responding to them" (p. 45). Similarly, Mitroff (2004) stated there is a difference between crisis management and crisis leadership with the former being reactive and the latter being proactive.

There is a significant body of research regarding crisis management, especially within the business arena (Saltz, 2017). Unfortunately, much less is known about crisis leadership with almost 80% of crisis leadership literature having been published since 1985 (Pauchant & Douville, 1993; Saltz, 2017; Schoenberg, 2005). Crisis leadership is typically intermingled with crisis management despite being a recognizably different component of crisis (Saltz, 2017; Schoenberg, 2005). Crisis leadership studies are frequently perceived to be disjointed and lacking an overall conceptual framework (Pauchant & Douville, 1993). During tough times organizations need effective leaders who understand the goals to be accomplished as well as how their actions impact their organization (Schoenberg, 2005).

Lagadec (1993) bemoaned that handling a crisis situation is “like a kaleidoscope. If you touch the smallest element in it, the entire structure is altered. Consequently, the crisis resists attempts to simplify it” (p. xxvii). Lagadec (1993) viewed crisis leadership as “making judgments, redefining standards, establishing options, defining strategies, remodeling power relationships, and sticking with a position when the conventional framework has become completely obsolete” (p. 8). James and Wooten (2005) declared the traditional approach to crisis management is insufficient, especially given the potential impacts and consequences. Instead of managing the crisis, James and Wooten (2005) asserted the leadership approach is necessary. The leadership approach is a proactive, holistic approach that gives careful consideration for the “organization, the crisis, and the environment” (James & Wooten, 2005, p. 145). Lagadec (1993) furthered, “Crisis is by nature an ambiguous landscape. There is no such thing as a final answer” (p. xxix).

Bolman and Deal (2008) asserted crisis leaders must have a key set of competencies to successfully lead an institution through the crisis phases. Leadership competencies are the skills,

knowledge, and capabilities that promote an individual's ability to complete an activity (Ulrich et al., 1999; Wooten & James, 2008). Based on research conducted by Wooten and James (2008), there are several critical leadership competencies that are needed during each phase of the crisis life cycle. Leaders possessing these essential competencies can deal with the crisis and leave the institution in a better position than it was prior to the crisis (Brockner & James, 2008).

Crisis Leadership and Mental Health

Campus crises such as natural disasters, health crises, and shooting incidents are occurring in the world on an almost daily basis (Norris et al., 2002a). Approximately 69% of individuals will be experience a crisis (Norris et al., 2002a). Crises can have physical, psychological and economic impacts (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). Of those involved in a crisis, approximately 15-24% will experience changes to their mental health (Norris et al., 2002a). Although not all disasters are traumatizing, many will experience feelings of helplessness and anxiety (Eth & Pynoos, 1985). Studies have shown that some crisis can have lasting mental health consequences (Norris et al., 2002b).

The COVID-19 pandemic is one example of a campus crisis. This public health crisis brought not only the risk of death but also psychological trauma (Xiao, 2020). According to Cao et al., (2020), 24.9% of Chinese college students experienced anxiety due to the COVID-19 crisis. The mental health impact of the pandemic was exacerbated by the necessity to quarantine (Xiao, 2020). Personal isolation can increase the likelihood and severity of conditions such as depression and anxiety. Moreover, the quarantine process can make interventions such as counseling more difficult (Xiao, 2020).

Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic college students lost a sense of normalcy and stability (Copeland et al., 2021). Due to neurodevelopmental risk, students entering late

adolescence often have suboptimal decision making leading to impulsive, risky behaviors (Casey et al., 2008). This is particularly challenging for college students under decreased “parental supervision and support” (Copeland et al., 2021, p. 134). Moreover, the pandemic has been an extraordinary experience due to how swiftly it occurred as well as its longevity (Copeland et al., 2021).

Due to crisis’ potential mental health impact, it is important for community college presidents to recognize and understand the importance of college students’ mental health. In addition to proactively assessing and offering mental health services, it may be beneficial for leaders to include mental health services in their crisis planning. Those at greatest risk for experiencing extended mental health effects can be identified following a crises event (Norris et al., 2002b). Early mental health intervention after a crisis “includes many components that generally aim to foster resiliency, prevent chronic emotional problems, and minimize long-term deterioration in quality of life” (Norris et al., 2002b, p. 242). A mental health needs assessment should be done immediately following the incident (Flynn & Sharma, 2016) because 94% of crisis survivors report feeling posttraumatic stress symptoms the same week as the crisis event (North, 2003). This assessment helps determine the initial mental health needs (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). Crisis victims need access to a range of “medical, psychological, and social services...that addresses community and family, as well as individual needs” (Norris et al., 2002b, p. 242). In addition, some have recommended providing Psychological First Aid following a crisis because it offers survivors “a human connection” to help comfort and guide them through the process (Flynn & Sharma, 2016, p. 80). Mental health assessments should be done periodically to determine progress and to ensure resource adequacy (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). There is frequently an increased counseling need following a crisis event (Flynn & Sharma, 2016).

In addition to identifying individuals and connecting them with mental health services, survivors have a strong need for knowledge following the event therefore making communication critical (Hincker, 2014). Key information regarding the tragedy can reduce anxiety as well as provide information regarding essential resources (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). Fundamental facts should be repeated to ensure everyone is well informed (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). Any communication regarding mental health issues should be done in a timely manner and should be available both online as well as in print form (Flynn & Sharma, 2016).

Following a crisis there are a wide variety of reactions (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). Generally, those most affected by the incident have strong responses although they vary in terms of longevity and intensity (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). The consequences of the tragedy can last for a long time (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). Typically, these reactions resolve with the passage of time although this may not be the case for those most impacted by the crisis (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). These individuals may need the assistance of mental health professionals to help them cope (Flynn & Sharma, 2016).

Crisis Leadership in Higher Education

Since crises are not always preventable, effective educational leaders should not only possess key competencies, they, should also have a holistic crisis plan that is supported by all levels of the organization (Sivulich, 2000). Additionally, all institutional members should not only understand the plan but should have received essential training (Sivulich, 2000). Sivulich (2000) asserted that having “a crisis management plan alone will not prevent campus crisis... Yet a detailed plan and continuing instruction of university administrators could certainly help change the outcome” (para. 44). The innate characteristics of higher education present additional

burdens that must be effectively managed by crisis leadership to ensure a successful outcome (U.S. Department, 2013).

Using a holistic crisis leadership approach is essential, especially due to the planning challenges higher educational institutions face merely due to their inherent characteristics (U.S. Department, 2013). Educational institutions vary widely in size, location, and many operate on a 24-hour schedule. They may be located in large cities or remote rural areas with some having large campuses that include athletic complexes, libraries, gyms and transportation systems (U.S. Department, 2013). Many operate with an open campus environment, and some have on campus housing. The governance structure is “highly varied and often widely dispersed” (U.S. Department, 2013, p. 1). At many colleges, each academic department is decentralized and operates with its own sets of rules and processes, therefore making a standardized security policy nearly impossible. The student population is continuously changing with a mix of commuters and on-line students. These characteristics make crisis management planning and crisis leadership more challenging but not impossible (U.S. Department, 2013).

With the unique challenges that higher educational institutions face, it is important to have competent leadership. In fact, having an effectual leader during a crisis substantially increases an institution’s chances of a positive outcome (Muffet-Willet, 2010). If a crisis is not handled well, it can have significant negative results for the institution (Garcia, 2006). Additionally, institutional survival following a crisis is highly correlated with how timely and effective the crisis is handled (Garcia, 2006). During the crisis leaders must reassure key stakeholders they recognize the problem and are confronting the situation (Garcia, 2006). In a crisis, leaders must not appear to be indifferent, especially in the early crisis phases.

Crisis experts often refer to the Golden Hour of crisis response. Garcia (2006) declared “Speed matters and time is a leader’s enemy in a crisis” (p. 5). This is the pivotal point in time where small delays have a substantial impact on the final outcome (Garcia, 2006). This is similar to the butterfly effect where small changes in the beginning state can result in huge changes in the final outcome (Goldberg & Markoczy, 2000).

Most leaders are aware of the potential negative outcomes of not effectively handling crisis situations, unfortunately their training and work experiences do not adequately prepare them for crisis leadership (Wooten & James, 2008). Successful crisis leadership requires many competencies such as risk taking, managing change, and cultivating institutional agility. With business environments that are continually changing and growing in complexity, it is imperative leaders have the competencies necessary to be able to successfully deal with crisis (Garcia, 2006).

This research is of great import since leaders in higher education shoulder intense accountability and responsibility while attempting to meet the often conflicting demands of their stakeholders. Over time the urgency for effective educational leadership has steadily increased due to the many challenges faced by higher education (Kezar et al., 2006). Educational institutions face constant change and must continually adapt (Birnbaum, 1992). Funding concerns, issues regarding accountability and assessment, globalization and competition are placing greater stress on educational institutions (Kezar et al., 2006). Recent research studies have demonstrated a relationship between institutional quality and community college president effectiveness (Broome, 2003; Hua, 2005; Powell, 2004). An institution’s ability to respond to these numerous challenges will at least partially depend upon the presidents who lead them. In this new environment of ever-increasing demands, “expectations for community college

presidents have grown more complex, demanding, and even contradictory and have dramatically changed the presidency...into a calling of high expectations, broad responsibility, and limitless challenges” (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997, p. 13). Presidents operate in continually changing environments that will test both their institution and efficacy. Events that initially appear to be inconsequential can have dramatic long-term consequences (Birnbaum, 1992). Minimal research has been conducted regarding competencies needed for leading during a crisis (James & Wooten, 2010). Whether an organization recovers is dependent upon the ability of a leader to act before, during, and following a crisis (James & Wooten, 2010).

Crisis Phases and Competencies

Effective crisis leaders facilitate a competency-based approach to managing crises (Bass, 1985). This approach focused on skills, knowledge, and capabilities which are all under the leader’s control and can be enhanced over time (James & Wooten, 2010). Pearson and Mitroff (1993) developed a five-phase crisis management process consisting of signal detection, preparation and prevention, damage containment, recovery, and learning, which will be used for this research instead of Zdziarski’s (2007) five phase process. Although they are very similar, Pearson and Mitroff’s (1993) five phase process included signal detection which is of critical import in averting and minimizing potential crises.

Signal Detection

During the signal detection phase crisis leaders should perceive early warnings of a potential crisis, however, leaders do not always sense the impending crisis (James & Wooten, 2010). Since institutions are continually inundated with an overabundance of information, they therefore must deliberately and regularly search for crisis warning signals (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993).

In this phase the crucial competency is sense-making. “Sense making involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). Weick et al. (2005) declared sense making involves three key questions: How does a situation become an event? What is the meaning of the event? How should I respond to the event? Effective leaders are aware of these questions and formulate responses leading to action (Wooten & James, 2008). During the signal detection phase, effective leaders must have the ability to make sense of events that may initially appear to be unrelated (Wooten & James, 2008). As stated by Pearson and Mitroff (1993), “In every crisis situation we have examined, no single crisis has occurred in isolation. The simultaneous occurrence of multiple crises has been the norm” (p. 52).

In addition to sense-making, it is also critical to have the ability to understand another person’s viewpoint (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Understanding others’ perspectives enables leaders to demonstrate empathy towards stakeholders which is a key leadership responsibility (James & Wooten, 2010). Perspective taking is particularly useful in the signal detection stage since failure to consider the ramifications of events can be construed as being insensitive (James & Wooten, 2010). James and Wooten (2010) asserted perspective taking is a key differentiation between crisis leaders and crisis managers.

Preparation and Prevention

Phase two of the process, preparation and prevention, is an essential aspect of crisis management (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Zdziarski et al., 2007). All campus stakeholders, both internal and external, must be aware of crisis issues and actively work towards thwarting any potential crisis situations (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Zdziarski et al., 2007). For planning purposes institutions should explore the types of incidents they are more likely to experience,

such as weather events, and develop plans to either prevent them from occurring or minimize their impact. Any crisis plan must be continually reviewed, updated and distributed throughout the institution. As individuals are gathered to learn about the plan, plan ownership starts building throughout the organization which strengthens the institution's ability to effectively respond to a crisis (Zdziarski et al., 2007).

An important competency in this phase is issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Leaders must have the ability to garner support for important issues. A key component of issue selling is the ability to change a firm's strategic direction (Wooten & James, 2008). Due to the remote chances of a crisis, and the typically large number of concrete issues to be addressed, crisis planning, and preparation is often not a top concern for decision makers (Wooten & James, 2008). Thus, it is essential effective leaders sell the import of crisis planning and preparation (Wooten & James, 2008).

In the crisis planning and preparation phase, effective leaders must have organizational agility (Wooten & James, 2008). Organizationally agile leaders understand the entire organization and can easily move between functions or departments to complete necessary assignments (Wooten & James, 2008). Although a crisis may initially impact primarily one aspect of the organization, crisis leaders recognize it can quickly spread organization-wide putting the entire entity at risk (Wooten & James, 2008).

In addition to organizational agility, creativity is an essential competency in the prevention and preparation phase. Creativity frequently refers to something new or original and in the workplace it is often in the form of a new product or service (Mumford, 2011; Wooten & James, 2008). Although many have said creativity is most pertinent in the damage and containment phase, Wooten and James (2008) asserted it is correspondingly essential in the crisis

preparation and prevention phase. Effective leaders must creatively brainstorm different ways their firm could be impacted and then develop the necessary plans to address them (Wooten & James, 2008).

Damage Control/Containment

Damage control and containment is the third phase of crisis management (James & Wooten, 2010). In this phase successful leaders try to limit all institutional threats and resolve the crisis as soon as possible (James & Wooten, 2010). Since a great deal of time is spent in this phase, this is the phase that typically resonates in the minds of stakeholders (James & Wooten, 2010).

When leaders initially view an event as a crisis, the perceived threat often results in leaders feeling fearful and anxious therefore impairing the leader's decision making ability (Brockner & James, 2008; James & Wooten, 2010; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Crises are situations requiring quick responses with limited information (Wooten & James, 2008). Due to these inherent characteristics, crises are difficult for decision making (Wooten & James, 2008). Thus, a vital leadership competency is the ability to make solid, quick decisions during stressful situations (Wooten & James, 2008).

In the damage containment phase, response teams are activated (Zdziarski et al., 2007). Personal relationships will be tested during this stressful situation, so an essential competency is effective communication (Wooten & James, 2008). During a crisis, communications are often focused on presenting the institution and the situation in the best manner possible (Coombs, 1995; James & Wooten, 2006). In crisis situations, effective leaders emotionally connect with their constituents and are therefore able to influence constituent's opinions (Sturges, 1994).

In addition to effective communication, it is imperative leaders recognize the value of risk taking (Wooten & James, 2008). In threatening situations decision makers often limit potential options based on past actions (Staw et al., 1981). Effective leaders realize being overly risk averse may inhibit the institution's ability to surmount a crisis (Wooten & James, 2008).

Recovery

An institution's recovery time varies widely and is highly dependent upon several factors (Zdziarski et al., 2007). Survivability is based on the relationship that exists between resources availability and the amount of resources required to address the crisis event. In some situations, assistance may be required from outside agencies. In this phase organizations execute short and long term business recovery plans to help the organization resume normal operations (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). Some leaders use the crisis situation as a catalyst for organizational change (Brockner & James, 2008). A leader's "ability to see an organization through a crisis and, in the end, for the organization to be better off following the crisis" is resiliency (Wooten & James, 2008, p. 371).

With smaller crisis events an educational institution can concentrate its resources and resume normal operations fairly quickly. Following the event, memorials, ceremonies and other activities can greatly assist in the healing process. These events also provide an opportunity to thank those who have assisted during the crisis (Zdziarski et al., 2007).

Another essential leadership competency in this phase is acting with integrity (Hyman et al., 1990). When an institution is at fault for a crisis, constituents often view the situation as a betrayal (Wooten & James, 2008). In the recovery phase it is essential for leaders to regain the trust of their constituents (Wooten & James, 2008).

Learning

Following the crisis, it is essential to take time and learn what went well and what could have been done better (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Regardless of size all events provide invaluable information that will assist in handling the next crisis event. This is a crucial time to review the crisis management plan and make all necessary changes. Moreover, all who responded to the crisis should be debriefed since debriefings provide exceptional learning opportunities (Zdziarski et al., 2007).

Crises provide unique opportunities to change organizational processes and behaviors (Wooten & James, 2008). Effective leaders acknowledge the learning opportunities that present themselves in crisis situations (Wooten & James, 2008). Insight obtained during the crisis can provide innovative solutions regarding crisis leadership (Wooten & James, 2008).

Importance of Context

In addition to understanding the key competencies, the effectiveness of leadership, asserted Osborn et al. (2002), is dependent upon context. Osborn et al.'s (2002) understanding of the relationship between leadership effectiveness and context is different than the predominate interpretation. The prevailing interpretation is leadership behaviors change based on the situation (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborn et al. (2002) thought "leadership is embedded in the context. It is socially constructed in and from a context where patterns over time must be considered and where history matters" (p. 798). Leadership is the result of not only the relationship between a leader and followers, but more importantly is the synergetic influence of leaders existing in and out of the system (Osborn et al., 2002).

Beginning in the 1970s the contextual concept of leadership started to emerge (Osborn et al., 2002). The fundamental concept was leadership was "embedded within the environment,

structure and technology of organizations” (Osborn et al., 2002, p. 798). These leadership approaches were consistent with leadership models espoused by Fiedler (1964) and House (1971) which stated a need for consistency between the leader’s behaviors and the context. Supporters of the conceptual leadership concept suggested the various contextual factors such as structure, environment, technology, and organization should be examined using a systems framework (House & Aditya, 1997). Osborn et al. (2002) proclaimed a significant perspective shift is required due to the significant interplay between leaders and organizations. The leader and the context cannot be separated (Osborn et al., 2002). Leadership theory is part of an overarching system framework whereby identical actions by different leaders can produce dramatically different results due to the interactions of the system components (Osborn et al., 2002). This is similar to the butterfly effect where small changes in the system can amplify or produce significantly different results (Goldberg & Markoczy, 2000; Osborn et al., 2002).

Due to the dynamic nature of organizations, Osborn et al. (2002) proclaimed leadership theory should also be dynamic. In addition to reviewing the system over time it is important to take a systemic view of leadership (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborn et al. (2002) asserted leadership should be viewed in four different contexts: stability, crisis, dynamic equilibrium and the edge of chaos. Stability is defined as when there are “consistent constrained demands and limited choices” and focuses on leadership at the lowest level of the leadership hierarchy (Osborn et al., 2002, p. 802). The second context, crisis, is defined as a situation threatening high priority goals that happens suddenly and is characterized by both time and resource constraints and focuses on middle management (Hermann, 1969; Osborn et al., 2002). Dynamic equilibrium, the third context, recognizes the ambiguity of demands and constraints in a changing system (Osborn et al., 2002). Finally, the fourth context is referred to as the edge of chaos (Osborn et al., 2002).

During the fourth phase, the focus is on overall leadership and the “fitness of the system” (Osborn et al., 2002, p. 803). Osborn et al. (2002) declared leadership changes as the context changes.

Organizational Culture

An important aspect of context is organizational culture. Louis & Wahlstrom (2011) declared, “culture matters” (p. 52). Institutions with strong cultures are more likely to achieve their goals and have more motivated and committed employees (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Understanding the campus culture is essential because it impacts not only the leadership process (Birnbaum, 1992; Kezar et al., 2006) but affects all facets of an institution (Bolman & Deal, 2021). Additionally, the definition of effective leadership varies by institution (Neumann, 1987). Leaders must “embrace the notion that we cannot understand leadership outside the cultural context of an institution” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 125).

Community College Governance

Community college governance is complex as it involves both structure and process (Peterson & Mets, 1987). Governance, according to Corson (1960) is processes by which decisions are arrived at, who participates in these processes, the structures that relates these individuals, and the effort that is made (or should be made) to see to it that decisions once made are carried out, and to assess the results that are achieved (p. 12-13).

Understanding college governance is crucial for crisis management (Birnbaum, 1988). Cohen and March (1986) have used the term “organized anarchy” which referenced any organization demonstrating three characteristics: “problematic goals” that are vague or inconsistent, “unclear technology” meaning the organization does not know what it is doing and often uses trial and

error approaches, and “fluid participation” recognizing the amount of time and effort devoted varies greatly and organizational boundaries are not clear and continually changing (pp. 2-3). Colleges, according to Weick (1976), are comprised of loosely coupled systems that work together yet still maintain their individual identity.

Richardson (1975) developed three models, bureaucratic, political, and collegial, to help better understand how colleges operate. For community colleges, the bureaucratic and political models have the greatest applicability. The bureaucratic model operates with a formalized organizational structure with authority being delegated from the top down. Functions are defined based on policy and legal decisions. Positions within the college are arranged in a pyramid structure with those at the top having greater responsibilities and privileges. Faculty and students are at the bottom of the pyramid structure having the least responsibilities and privileges. The political model is based on conflict between several competing forces including students, faculty, administrators, and trustees. Each entity is clamoring to ensure its needs are met (Richardson, 1975). Ultimately, the college direction is dictated by compromises between the competing needs of the various entities (Cohen et al., 2014).

Kater (2017) posited that community colleges operate under a “concept of shared governance” that is “both revered and imprecise” (p. 235). Burgan (2006) underscored the intricacy of community college operations with many goals, stakeholders, and traditions. Ultimately, the goal is to get all of the various parts working together in harmony (Burgan, 2006). Unfortunately, colleges seldom live up to their own ideals of shared power and authority (Burgan, 2006). Higher education has grown in increasing complexity as it attempts to meet the demands of different groups with often conflicting views, needs, and objectives. Additionally, the concept that students are at the forefront of college affairs is far from reality. Procedures in

community colleges typically tend towards the protection of the staff. Fortunately, in recent years there has been a trend towards greater sharing of oversight between administrators, faculty, and staff (Cohen et al., 2014).

Centralization of all functions is difficult due to staff members' strong desires for independence and participative decision making (Cohen et al., 2014). Ideally, individuals would participate at all levels of the institution, but typically power flows towards central administration. This is a challenge when many colleges are trying to increase employee engagement and empowerment. Shared governance was mandated in the late 1980s to ensure faculty and staff could provide input in the decision-making process. As a result, many documents have been created in an attempt to delineate the responsibilities of faculty associations, staff organizations, local boards, local and state governments, state boards, and college administrators. Governance in each state varies based on state law and court rulings (Cohen et al., 2014).

Public colleges are typically controlled by a board of education (Cohen et al., 2014). Based on information obtained by the Education Commission of the States' (2019) Postsecondary Governance Structures Database, there is some level of state control in all 50 states. Most state governance structures fall into one of five different categories: state board of education, state board or commission of higher education, statewide coordinating board, state governing board, or a statewide board of regents. In the cases of governance by a state board, funding and operating decisions are centralized. There is still a great deal of variation amongst the various state boards. In some states the university and community college systems have been combined. College autonomy has been reducing over time. Many feel this reduced autonomy has made educational administrator's jobs more difficult. Additionally, some feel colleges are not as

responsive to their communities. Others feel statewide coordination offers benefits such as more equitable funding between community college districts (Cohen et al., 2014).

Crisis Leadership Competencies

Pearson and Clair (1998) declared the five key factors describing a crisis are small chance of occurrence, minimal response time, may be a surprise, poses decision making challenges, and both the cause and effect may be unknown. These factors impact leaders' abilities to make quick, successful decisions during a crisis (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Others have supported this notion that in times of crisis decisions must be made quickly in situations that are often ambiguous and confusing (Billings et al., 1980; Hermann, 1963; Seeger et al., 2003). Many wonder what type of leader works best during a crisis?

According to Rowe (2008) there are ten crucial competencies of effective crisis leaders.

1. See events as they are. Leaders must recognize the importance of the events and their potential consequences. Successful leaders have integrity and look for what is best for the institution.

2. The leader must see the big picture. Leaders must be able to identify the cause and effect and have the ability to view the problem realistically.

3. Leaders must consider several options. Successful crisis leaders are willing to look at several potential problem solving approaches. They realize their solution may not be the ultimate solution.

4. Leaders act decisively and take ownership of their decisions. They understand they may need to sell the issue to key stakeholders.

5. Strong leaders are collaborators who realize successful solutions require the involvement of many.

6. Successful crisis leaders also listen to advice that is unpopular. They look for different perspectives on issues.

7. Leaders must maintain a calm and positive approach during stressful times. They bravely deliver bad news in a manner that avoids panicking their audience.

8. Leaders must be willing to take risks. During times of crisis, leaders are often faced with situations they previously have not experienced. Successful leaders are willing to obtain viewpoints from a wide variety of individuals to create novel solutions.

9. Leaders should follow the 80% rule and realize they will not always have all the information they would like to make decisions. Often a less than perfect decision is a better option than proceeding without a decision.

10. Successful leaders readily admit their mistakes. They take risks and at some point will make a mistake (Rowe, 2008).

In addition to possessing certain leadership competencies, Du Plessis & Keyter (2020) declared there is not one particular leadership style for effectively dealing with a crisis since each style has its advantages and disadvantages. COVID-19 has highlighted the interconnectedness of the world with virtually every country being impacted by the outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic started as a health crisis and has since mushroomed into a health, social, economic and political crisis (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020).

Crisis Leadership Styles

The most effective leadership style varies based on the situation (Bowers et al., 2017; Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020; Osborn et al., 2002). Leaders should be cognizant of this issue and ensure they have the skills and competencies needed to effectively deal with crises that can threaten both their careers and their institution's existence (Harwati, 2013). Purnomo et al.

(2021) investigated educational leadership during a crisis. The leadership style utilized can impact organizational performance (Al Khajeh, 2018). Four different leadership styles were examined: charismatic, entrepreneurial, transformative and transactional (Purnomo et al., 2021). These were studied since they are the four most commonly utilized educational leadership styles (Purnomo et al., 2021). Since the community college presidents utilized the servant, democratic, and coaching leadership styles, these leadership styles were also examined.

Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leadership theory is often attributed to Max Weber (2013) who thought followers were drawn to charismatic leaders due to the extraordinary qualities they possessed. Through their optimism, commitment and fervor, charismatic leaders inspire their followers and garner crucial support (Javidan & Waldman, 2003; Shao et al., 2017). Using inspiration and motivation, charismatic leaders promote organizational unity and productivity (Lindberg, n.d.). Compared with other leadership styles, charismatic leadership is “more personality bound” (Lindberg, n.d., para. 11).

Charismatic leaders skillfully communicate an idyllic vision which conveys beliefs and values (Javidan & Waldman, 2003). By capitalizing on their belief system, charismatic leaders gain follower support and commitment to their vision (Javidan & Waldman, 2003). Charismatic leaders understand their followers’ emotions and use that to their advantage (Lindberg, n.d.). Some have argued that charismatic leaders possess not only common behaviors but also common personal traits (Javidan & Waldman, 2003). This view, however, has not been thoroughly studied (House, 1992; Yukl, 2002). Although there are many traits, those typically discussed include: “self-confidence, eloquence, high energy and determination” (Javidan & Waldman, 2003, p. 231).

Transformational Leadership

Introduced by Burns (1979), transformational leadership bears many similarities with charismatic leadership (Anderson & Sun, 2017). Like charismatic leadership, transformational leaders impassion their followers to focus on the greater good by placing organizational goals ahead of personal goals (Anderson & Sun, 2017; Bass, 1985). These leaders create a framework consisting of values, morals and skills based on followers' motivational levels (Al Khajeh, 2018). Transformational leaders understand and cater to their followers' unique needs (Al Khajeh, 2018).

Transformational leadership behaviors, according to Youngsam et al. (2019), can be aligned into four areas: “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration” (p. 8). Idealized influence referenced the different ways leaders engage followers (Youngsam et al., 2019). Bass (1985) referred to charisma as idealized influence which means “the degree to which the leader behaves in ways that cause followers to identify with the leader” (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, p. 755). Common terms for idealized influence include: “benevolent, admirable, and charismatic behavior” (Youngsam et al., 2019, p. 8). According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), inspirational motivation is “the degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers’ and challenges followers with high standards, communicates optimism about future goal attainment, and provides meaning for the task at hand” (p. 755). The third component, intellectual stimulation, is “the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks, and solicits follower’s ideas and how much they stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers” (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, p. 755). Individualized consideration, the final component, is “the degree to which the leader

attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower, and listens to the follower's concerns and needs" (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, p. 755).

There is considerable debate whether charismatic leadership and transformational leadership are different leadership styles (Fiol et al., 1999). Many agree with Fiol et al. (1999) who stated, "The similarities among these theories are, in our opinion, far greater than their differences" (p. 451). In some literature studies charismatic and transformational leadership have been combined (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Walter & Bruch, 2009). Lindberg (n.d.) asserted, however that despite the similarities between charismatic and transformational leaders, there are also some key differences. First, charismatic leadership centers around the leader and the leader's personality whereas transformational leadership emphasizes a common vision. Transformational leaders are concerned with ensuring everyone's performance reaches a higher level. While transformational leaders prioritize empowerment, charismatic leadership is based on following the charismatic leader's directions. Individual development is highlighted by the transformational leader. Charismatic leaders use their followers more as devices to reach the charismatic leader's goals. Finally, the charismatic leaders' vision becomes the group's vision. With transformational leaders, the group works together to create a shared vision (Lindberg, n.d.).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is based on an exchange of resources and is comprised of contingent reward, and two forms of management by exception (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Contingent reward is the extent to which a leader develops transactions with their followers (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Leaders set expectations and specify the rewards to be received if all requirements are met (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The extent to which a leader takes corrective

action for leader-follower exchanges is referred to as management by exception and can be either passive or active (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Active leaders are those who diligently monitor follower's behaviors and intervene before the behavior causes severe harm (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). On the other hand, passive leaders wait to intervene until the follower's behaviors have caused issues (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Entrepreneurial Leadership

The earliest references of entrepreneurial leadership in higher education was by Peck (1983) who theorized about the advantages of using entrepreneurial leadership in university settings. Under this leadership style, leaders can delegate and build essential employee skills (Sajjadi et al., 2014). Often described as agile, nimble, and proactive, entrepreneurial leaders cultivate a culture of change and innovation and emphasize opportunity recognition and exploitation (Butler, 2017; Jagdale & Shankar, 2014; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Tarabishy & Solomon, 2005; Wahab & Tyasari, 2020). These leaders communicate a captivating future vision that stimulates followers' commitment (Renko et al., 2015). Followers feel empowered and are motivated to achieve institutional success (Renko et al., 2015). Butler (2017) declared entrepreneurs have three competencies, "the ability to thrive in uncertainty, a passionate desire to author and own projects, and unique skill at persuasion" (para. 4). Other noteworthy competencies include curiosity, persistence, tenacity and restlessness (Butler, 2017; Renko et al., 2015).

Like charismatic leadership, entrepreneurial leadership also shares some similarities with transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Entrepreneurial leaders look for new ways of doing things and challenge the status quo (Renko et al., 2015). Like their transformational leader counterparts, entrepreneurial leaders do not adapt to situations but rather try to shape them

(Lowe et al., 1996). Moreover, both entrepreneurial and transformational leaders encourage followers to develop novel solutions to old problems (Bass, 1985).

Although entrepreneurial leaders share many similarities with their transformational leader counterparts, there are also many differences. Despite leading with clearly defined goals, entrepreneurial leaders are not described as being charismatic as often as transformational leaders (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Additionally, unlike transformational leaders, entrepreneurial leaders do not recognize the individual needs and abilities of their followers and instead focus on building passion for innovation and creativity (Bandura, 1986; Bass & Avolio, 1995; Cardon et al., 2009). The primary emphasis of entrepreneurial leadership is identifying and exploiting opportunities (Renko et al., 2015).

Servant Leadership

One of the leadership styles exhibited by the community college presidents was servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf is typically credited with creating the term servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011). According to Greenleaf (1977),

The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such, it will be a later choice to serve-after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. (pp. 29-30).

This is the closest we have regarding a definition of servant leadership from Greenleaf. Servant leaders focus on meeting the "high priority needs" of others first (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 30).

Whereas most leadership styles emphasize organizational success, servant leadership highlights service to followers (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership is based on the concept that people are to be valued, in other words, they have “inherent worth, a dignity not only to be strived for, but also beneath this striving, a dignity irrevocably connected to the reality of being human” (Ferch, 2005, p. 98). Having a strong follower orientation builds strong relationships within the organization (van Dierendonck, 2011). The underlying need to serve others is pivotal to great leadership since it results in a commitment to employee development, organizational survival, and community accountability (Reinke, 2004).

Since servant leadership has not been clearly defined by Greenleaf, attempts have been made to identify the competencies of servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011). Spears (1995), former director of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, was one of the first to identify servant-leader competencies. According to Spears (1995), servant-leaders have the following 10 competencies. Servant leaders are empathetic and accept people as they are. They understand the importance of listening and can persuade others without using their position power. They are self-aware and have the ability to conceptualize and identify future needs. They help build a sense of community and are committed to the personal, professional and spiritual growth of others. In addition to predicting situational outcomes, they have the ability to heal. They are concerned with serving the needs of others.

Other competencies that have been associated with servant leadership include humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, empowerment, providing guidance, and stewardship (van Dierendonck, 2011). Humility, according to van Dierendonck (2011) is “the extent to which a leader puts the interest of others first, facilitates their performance and provides them with essential support.” (p. 1233). Authenticity is being consistent with and true to your innermost

feelings (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Interpersonal acceptance includes the ability to understand others' perspectives and feelings as well the ability to forgive (Ferch, 2005). Servant leaders empower their employees, thus boosting employee self-confidence and motivation (Conger, 2000). Acting as role models, servant leaders encourage followers to take accountability for the organization versus their self-interest (Spears, 1995). Spears (1995) asserted, "stewardship is less a prescription than about being accountable and owning-about making democracy work at work" (p. 111). Under servant leadership, stewardship is the concept that mediocre performance will not be accepted (Reinke, 2004). Everyone must remain "focused on achieving organizational objectives within the constraints of shared organizational values" (Reinke, 2004, p.33). Servant leaders make sure their followers clearly understand their roles and responsibilities (Laub, 1999).

Like other leadership styles, servant leadership bears some resemblance to transformational leadership. Transformational leaders also emphasize follower development through individualized consideration. Individualized consideration is the extent to which a leader attends to the needs of their followers (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transformational leadership also includes idealized influence which Bass (1985) referred to as charisma. This is where transformational leadership and servant leadership differ. Transformational leaders are focused more on organizational goals whereas servant leaders are more focused on the needs of their followers (van Dierendonck, 2011).

Democratic Leadership

In addition to servant leadership, some community college presidents utilized a democratic leadership style which is also commonly referred to as participative, or shared, leadership. Although the leader makes the final decision, employees openly debate and share

ideas and opinions (Debell, 2019, Malos, 2012). Democratic leaders provide guidance and want followers to be actively involved and feel good about their role in decision-making (Ahmed et al., 2018; Debell, 2019; Malos, 2012). To be effective, followers must be eagerly involved in the process (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Democratic leadership empowers subordinates and fosters a sense of belonging. Under democratic leadership employees are engaged and feel they have control over their destiny (Ahmed et al., 2018; Debell, 2019). Employees are rewarded for their creativity (Debell, 2019). Often characterized as being supportive and friendly, democratic leaders emphasize employee's strengths not their mistakes (Bass, 1990; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018; Malos, 2012). Often working in small groups, employees become committed to performing tasks feeling their work will be observed and valued (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018). Thinking critically, democratic leaders must be courageous and willing to challenge the status quo if there is a better way (Debell, 2019).

Coaching Leadership

According to Berg, the coaching leadership style focuses on action and accountability where leaders are encouraged to personally take responsibility (as cited in Vesso & Alas, 2016). Vesso and Alas (2016) declared "coaching is the process of challenging and supporting a person or a team in order to develop ways of thinking, ways of being and ways of learning" (p. 306). Acting like coaches these leaders actively partner and collaborate with their employees (Sutton, 2021). Leaders are strongly interested in developing their employee's potential as well creating a supportive work environment so individuals can constructively manage conflict (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Hunt & Weintraub, 2002; Vesso & Alas, 2016). This safe work environment strengthens relationships and self-confidence and fosters creativity and motivation (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Sutton, 2021). By using a questioning versus a telling approach, coaching leaders

encourage individuals to think autonomously (Mukherjee, 2012; Randak-Jezierska, 2015). To optimize the benefits of this style, leaders must want to help build their employees' skills sets and employees must be eager to learn and open to constructive feedback (Sutton, 2021). By developing their own solutions, the often paternalistic employee-manager relationship shifts to one based on respect and cooperation (Mukherjee, 2012; Wood, 2011).

There are common competencies of coaching leadership such as 360-degree feedback of both management and employees (Sutton, 2021). Delegation is used as a tool to help grow employee skillsets. Leaders help employees understand the connection between the day-to-day tasks and the goals driving those tasks. Leaders let their employees complete their work and do not micro-manage them. Instead of utilizing top-down decision making, leaders help guide and support employees. Under coaching leadership an employee's personal and professional development is supported (Sutton, 2021).

Summary

Effective leadership styles are situationally-based and successful leaders must have the skills and competencies necessary to effectively deal with crises (Al Khajeh, 2018; Bowers et al., 2017; Harwati, 2013; Osborn et al., 2002). Institutional performance can be impacted by the leadership style used (Al Khajeh, 2018; Harwati, 2013). Based on Purnomo et al.'s (2021) studies of educational leadership during a crisis, the four most commonly used educational leadership styles were studied: charismatic, transformational, transactional, and entrepreneurial. Additionally, the servant, democratic, and coaching leadership styles were also examined since these were the leadership styles used by the community college presidents in the study.

Charismatic leaders exude motivation, optimism, and idealism which inspires their followers (Javidan & Waldman, 2003; Shao et al., 2017). Unlike other leadership styles,

charismatic leadership is centered around the leader's personality (Lindberg, n.d.).

Transformational leaders share similarities with charismatic leaders since both styles inspire followers to place organizational goals ahead of personal goals (Anderson & Sun, 2017; Bass, 1985). There are also many similarities between transformational and entrepreneurial leaders. Transformational leaders, like entrepreneurial leaders, challenge the status quo and encourage follower creativity and look for innovative solutions to old problems (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Despite the similarities between entrepreneurial and transformational leadership, there are also many differences. Entrepreneurial leaders are not described as being charismatic as often as transformational leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 1990) and emphasize opportunity recognition and exploitation (Jagdale & Shankar, 2014; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Tarabishy & Solomon, 2005; Wahab & Tyasari, 2020). Unlike transformational or entrepreneurial leadership, transactional leadership is based on an exchange of resources between the leader and the follower (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The extent to which leaders develop transactions with their followers is referred to as contingent reward (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Servant leadership is distinctly different from transactional leadership. Servant leaders put the needs of others first (Greenleaf, 1977) which helps build strong relationships within the organization (van Dierendonck, 2011). Democratic leaders, however, want their employees to be actively involved in the decision-making process (Ahmed et al., 2018; Debell, 2019; Malos, 2012). This is only effective if employees want to be involved in the decision-making process (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Finally, coaching leaders foster a supportive work environment that increases their employees' self-confidence and also encourage creativity and motivation (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Hunt & Weintraub, 2002; Sutton, 2021; Vesso & Alas, 2016). The coaching

leader's primary focus is developing their employee's potential (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Hunt & Weintraub, 2002; Vesso & Alas, 2016).

In crisis situations, successful leaders recognize the most effective leadership style is situationally based (Al Khajeh, 2018; Bowers et al., 2017; Harwati, 2013; Osborn et al., 2002). Effective leaders have the necessary skills and competencies to nimbly move amongst leadership styles to ensure the best possible outcomes for their institutions. An effective leader increases the likelihood for a successful crisis outcome (Muffet-Willet, 2010).

Converged Leadership Style

Since the COVID-19 pandemic is a converging crisis, Du Plessis and Keyter (2020) declared a different leadership approach may be necessary due to the complexity of the issues and the global implications. Du Plessis and Keyter (2020) recommended using an adaptive leadership approach which combines the strengths of different leadership styles. Competencies of charismatic, transformational, transactional, servant, democratic, coaching and entrepreneurial leadership styles will be reviewed to determine how they could mitigate the COVID-19 crisis impacts.

Charismatic Leadership Competencies

Weber referenced charismatic leaders as individuals who are often described as exceptional and possess novel and enchanting qualities (Willner, 1984). In addition to "superhuman" qualities, according to Willner, (1984) followers "blindly believe the leader's statements", "unconditionally comply with the leader's directives" and "give the leader unqualified emotional commitment" (p. 8) which would offer some benefits during times of crisis. Due to their godlike appeal, charismatic leaders produce impassioned followers who willingly give up their own self-interests to support the charismatic leader's cause (Fiol et al.,

1999). Charismatic leadership can be immensely helpful in motivating and uniting followers (Seyranian & Bligh, 2008). Additionally, research has shown that charismatic leaders can enhance employee effort, satisfaction and performance which is of critical import during a crisis (Fiol et al., 1999).

Transformational Leadership Competencies

Like charismatic leadership, transformational leadership has competencies that can be extremely useful during turbulent times. According to Kelly (2003), transformational leadership is highly effective during a crisis due to how quickly transformational leaders respond. Bass (1985) declared transformational leaders have competencies that help manage a crisis and even mitigate potential negative outcomes. Using their idealized influence, transformational leaders model the key behaviors for their followers (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). As a result, a relationship of trust is built between the followers and their leader. Additionally, the inspirational motivation of the leader is critically important during a crisis. Leaders should openly communicate with their followers with a focus on the organizational vision. It is important that leaders maintain a positive, enthusiastic outlook during the crisis. Bass (1985) underscored the importance of intellectual stimulation amongst followers. Followers should be involved in decision making to help promote an innovative environment (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Finally, individualized consideration, or understanding the needs and motives of employees is important for leadership especially during a crisis (Bass, 1985).

Transactional Leadership Competencies

Zohair and Luria (2004) maintained that while the transformational leader addresses the crisis, the transactional leader implements the plan. Transactional leaders direct and facilitate the group's performance (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). To ensure strategies are implemented in a

timely manner, transactional leaders utilize rewards and punishments to ensure conformance. Avolio (1999) asserted transactional leadership has four dimensions: establishing goals and rewards for achievement, clearly defining expectations, and furnishing the required resources. These are helpful during and following the crisis (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Active management by exception, which is predicting potential problems, assessing progress and taking corrective measures, has competencies that are applicable before, during and after a crisis (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020).

Entrepreneurial Leadership Competencies

While transactional leadership is helpful for plan implementation (Zohair & Luria, 2004), entrepreneurial leadership provides resiliency during a crisis (Hutchinson et al., 2021). Filled with optimism, entrepreneurial leaders are convinced they will not merely survive a crisis but will actually thrive (Hutchinson et al., 2021). In addition to resiliency, entrepreneurial leaders are often characterized as having flexibility, perseverance, and high motivational levels (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Additionally, entrepreneurial leaders have a great deal of social capital which significantly influences their success during a crisis (Baron & Markman, 2000). They make good first impressions, are very persuasive, can readily adapt to a wide range of situations, and can easily read others (Baron & Markman, 2000). In a crisis, entrepreneurial leaders skillfully leverage these abilities to maximize the acquisition of both resources and emotional advocacy (Baron & Markman, 2000).

Servant Leadership Competencies

Unlike entrepreneurial leaders who emphasize organizational achievement, servant leaders are focused on serving the needs of others. They are very accepting and accept people as they are. Servant leaders are empathetic, self-aware, and are committed to the personal and

professional growth of others. They can persuade others without using the power of their position. Servant leaders build solid organizational relationships due to their strong follower orientation (van Dierendonck, 2011). Other common servant leadership competencies include humility, authenticity, and empowerment (van Dierendonck, 2011). These leaders, acting as role models, provide essential guidance and encourage their followers to place organizational interests ahead of personal interests (Spears, 1995).

Democratic Leadership Competencies

Under democratic leadership, ideas and opinions are freely shared and debated (Debell, 2019, Malos, 2012). In addition to providing guidance, democratic leaders are often described as being supportive and friendly (Ahmed et al., 2018; Bass, 1990; Debell, 2019; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018; Malos, 2012). These leaders empower their subordinates so employees are engaged and feel they can control their destiny (Ahmed et al., 2018; Debell, 2019). Democratic leaders focus on the strengths of their employees not their mistakes (Bass, 1990; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018; Malos, 2012). Democratic leaders are critical thinkers who courageously challenge the status quo to improve current processes (Debell, 2019).

Coaching Leadership Competencies

Coaching leaders are focused on obtaining results through follower accountability (Bennett & Bush, 2009). By collaborating with their employees, coaching leaders create supportive work environments to help employees achieve their potential (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Sutton, 2021). Coaching leaders use a questioning approach to encourage independent thinking (Mukherjee, 2012; Randak-Jeziarska, 2015). These leaders delegate and guide since their goal is to grow their employee's skillsets. Moreover, stated Berg (as cited in Vesso & Alas, 2016), they

emphasize effectively managing conflict and improving worker self-confidence to achieve institutional objectives (Bennett & Bush, 2009).

Adaptive Leadership

According to Heifetz (1994), during times of crisis we frequently look for leaders who have the answers. Instead, Heifetz (1994) stated we should not be “looking for saviors, we should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are no simple, painless solutions-problems that require us to learn new ways” (p. 2). Dealing with complex issues, leadership must be reimagined. We must advance the notion of utilizing our adaptive capabilities (Heifetz, 1994).

Du Plessis and Keyter (2020) declared there is not one leadership style that can handle a crisis since each leadership style has its strengths and weaknesses. The COVID-19 pandemic may require “a convergence of leadership styles” where the strengths of different leadership styles can be utilized (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020, p. 62). Charismatic, transformational, transactional, entrepreneurial, democratic, servant, and coaching leadership styles provide different strengths that are useful during turbulent times (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020).

Each leadership style provides advantages in crisis situations. Adaptive leadership leverages the strengths of different leadership styles. Adaptive leadership emphasizes adaptive work which is the learning necessary to decrease the disparity between personal values and reality (Heifetz, 1994). According to Heifetz (2009),

Adaptive leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive. New environments and new dreams demand new strategies and abilities, as well as the leadership to mobilize them. As in evolution, these new combinations and variations help

organizations thrive under challenging circumstances rather than perish, regress, or contract (p. 14).

To be successful, adaptive behaviors are built on the past. Leaders utilize the “best possible use of previous wisdom and know-how” (Heifetz, 2009, p. 15). Adaptive leadership requires an experimental mindset and the willingness to experience failures (Heifetz, 2009). Additionally, adaptive leadership takes time since learning can be challenging. In addition to recognizing and responding to these losses, successful leaders must recognize change takes time.

With adaptive work, beliefs or behaviors must be changed. Individuals are motivated to learn new behaviors due to the internal conflict they experience. The focus becomes understanding what is most important and balancing that against certain trade-offs. Adaptive leaders not only facilitate the discussions they determine who should be involved (Heifetz, 1994). Marshalling employees to address adaptive issues is the crux of leadership (Heifetz, 2009).

Heifetz and Laurie (1997) provided six principles for adaptive leadership: “getting on the balcony,” ascertain the adaptive challenge, manage distress, sustain a regulated approach, let employees handle the work, and safeguard employee voices. First, with adaptive leadership, leaders must step back and assess the overall system dynamics as though they were “on a balcony above the field of play” (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997, para. 8). Leaders should provide employees organizational context including the positive aspects about the organization’s history and the impact of current market forces. Leaders should clearly identify employee’s responsibilities in building the organization’s future (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Second, with adaptive leadership the adaptive challenge must be identified (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Leaders must clearly understand any values, beliefs or behaviors that must be

changed. It may also require shifting priorities and resources. Any conflicting values and norms must be revealed and confronted (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Third, the adaptive work process creates stress which must be managed (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Leaders must recognize that employee learning must be paced. Employee learning is frustrated when employees are overloaded, however completely removing all forms of stress removes any motivation for change. Leaders must find the right balance of change. Finally, adaptive leaders must recognize and address the discomfort associated with adaptive change (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Fourth, leaders must sustain a regulated approach (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Each individual in the organization has their own values and beliefs. Having diverse points of view are invaluable, however, leaders are often unable to confront competing points of view and instead use avoidance measures. Leaders and employees must have the tough conversations regarding trade-offs. The goal of adaptive leadership is to act as a facilitator who ensures individuals do not avoid but rather deal with harsh conflicts (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Fifth, let the employees handle the work (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Frequently employees begin relying too much on their leaders to deal with their challenges. As a result, employees become complacent as their leaders make all of the decisions. Unfortunately, this leads to work avoidance. Ensuring employees take responsibility for their work is not easy. Leadership needs to take a supportive versus controlling role (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Finally, if an organization is to learn, it is important to give everyone in the organization a voice (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Even though the voices may not be as polished, or be communicated at an inconvenient time and place, it is important to look for potentially useful

information. Additionally, the information must be handled appropriately to prevent disheartening a prospective leader.

Summary

Starting as a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic converged into a health, social, economic and political crisis (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Du Plessis and Keyter (2020) posited the COVID-19 crisis may best be addressed by a “convergence of leadership styles” (p. 62). Charismatic, transformational, transactional, entrepreneurial, democratic, servant, and coaching leadership styles were scrutinized to ascertain their usefulness in a crisis.

Each leadership style provides strengths during a crisis. Due to their captivating qualities, charismatic leadership creates fervent followers who willingly support their leader’s cause (Fiol et al., 1999). Further, having a charismatic leader has been shown to result in increased employee performance and satisfaction (Fiol et al., 1999). Modelling key behaviors, transformational leaders build trust with their followers (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Additionally transformational leaders understand the individual needs and motivations of their followers (Bass, 1985). In addition to playing a key role in plan implementation (Zohair & Luria, 2004), transactional leaders use rewards and punishments to ensure plan compliance (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Entrepreneurial leaders utilize their persuasive skills and uncanny ability to read individuals to exploit resource acquisition (Baron & Markman, 2000). Democratic leaders empower their employees and create a sense of belonging, improved employee engagement, and increased employee commitment (Ahmed et al., 2018; Debell, 2019; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018). Servant leaders, due to their strong follower orientation, have strong organizational relationships. Further, asserted Berg (as cited in Vesso & Alas, 2016) coaching leaders focus on increasing their employees’ conflict management abilities (Bennett & Bush,

2009). Each leadership style provides different advantages that can be extremely important in crisis situations.

Using different elements of the charismatic, transformational, transactional, entrepreneurial, democratic, servant and coaching leadership styles may diminish the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. The COVID-19 crisis has had worldwide impacts. The pandemic has highlighted global dependency (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Consequential changes in one country may affect the entire world. Leaders must reflect on a complex combination of challenges due to “political, economic, social, technological, technical, environmental, and global changes” (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020, p. 71). Dealing with these types of challenges may require novel leadership approaches realizing decisions made can have global repercussions. Due to dealing with multiple crises, leaders may need to modify their leadership approach. Using an adaptive leadership approach, the strengths of different leadership styles can be leveraged during a crisis.

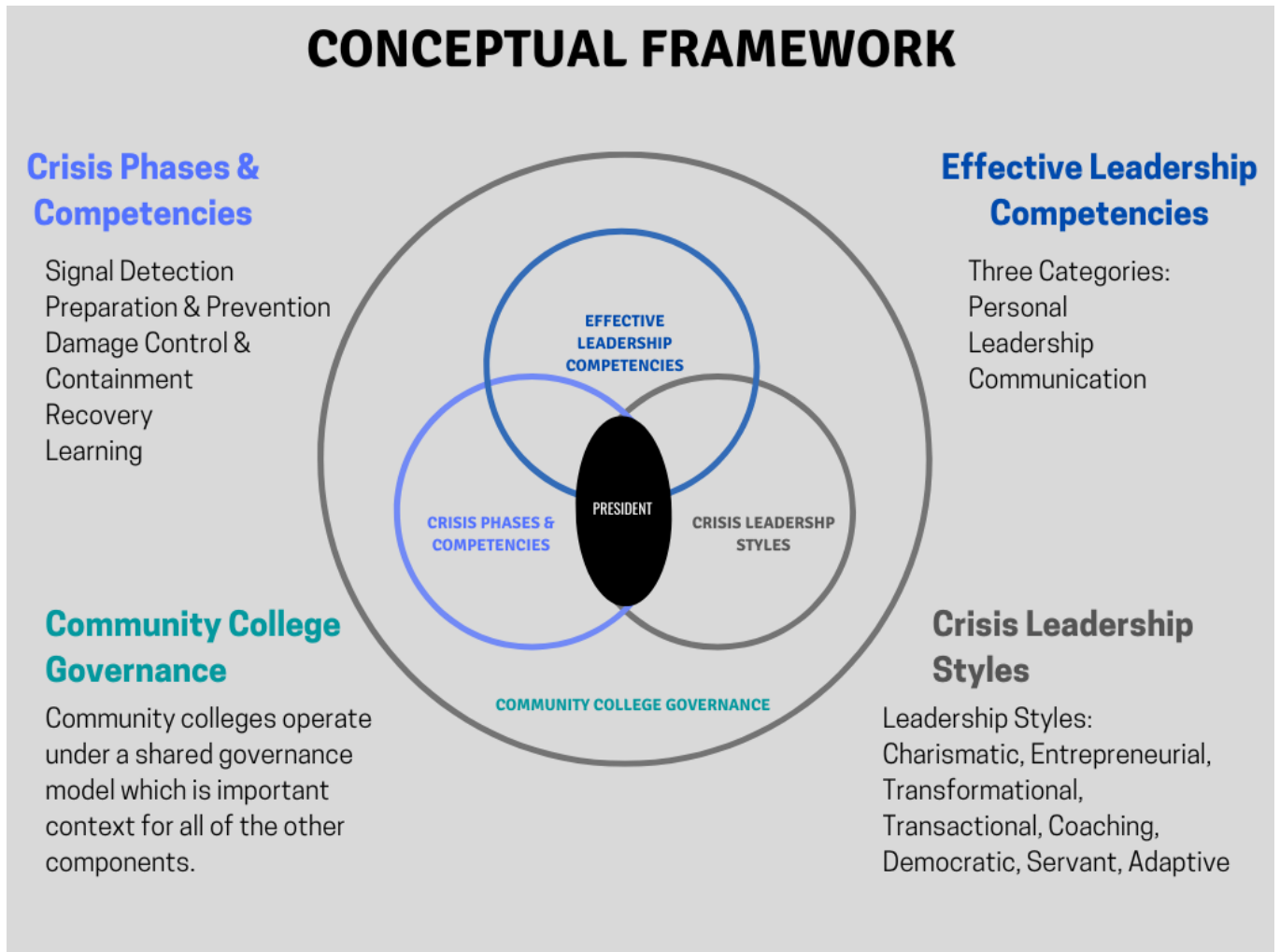
Adaptive leadership compels leaders to confront complex problems that necessitate finding fresh approaches to organizational practices (Du Plessis & Keyter, 2020). Under adaptive leadership, leaders must adjust and move beyond existing behavior patterns. An important aspect of adaptive leadership is understanding and clarifying the group’s fundamental values (Heifetz, 1994). Leaders must recognize not only the mainstream but also the different perspectives to be successful. Conflict should be openly discussed, and norms should be challenged (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). There are advantages to using adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994). First it demonstrates the importance of understanding different viewpoints of an issue. Without reality testing individuals may pursue their vision even though it is based on faulty insight. Emphasizing adaptive work allows individuals the ability to make decisions during the process versus waiting

until there is a decisive outcome. In addition, adaptive leadership forces individuals to examine harsh realities. Any conflicts or opposing views should be openly reviewed and discussed (Heifetz, 1994).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is comprised of crisis leadership styles, effective leadership competencies, and crisis leadership competencies within the context of community college governance and the COVID-19 crisis (see Figure 2.1). The community college president plays a central role in community college affairs and is appropriately depicted at the center of the conceptual framework. To understand community college presidents in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, we must understand crisis leadership styles, effective leadership competencies during a crisis, and the essential leadership competencies for each crisis phase. Community college presidents operate under a shared governance model which Cohen and March (1986) referred to as “organized anarchy” (pp. 2-3). Community college governance is very intricate due to the number of goals, stakeholders, and traditions (Burgan, 2006). Getting everyone to work harmoniously can be challenging in a normal environment. This can become an even greater hurdle during a crisis. This conceptual framework provides a crucial lens for examining and understanding effective community college leadership and decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



Summary

Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic has tested the limits for educational leaders and their institutions. Crises are monumental events that can significantly impact an institution's future (Klann, 2003). Educational leaders shoulder intense burdens of accountability and responsibility. The urgency for effective educational leadership has increased dramatically due to the multitude of challenges facing higher education (Kezar et al., 2006). Educational institutions and their leaders operate in ever changing environments and must continually adapt (Birnbaum, 1992).

Having effective leadership greatly increases the institution's chances of a positive outcome (Muffet-Willet, 2010). The ability of an institution to recover is dependent upon the competency of a leader to act before, during, and after a crisis (James & Wooten, 2010). Moreover, leadership effectiveness is dependent upon context (Osborn et al., 2002). Leadership behaviors and the most effective leadership style vary based on the situation (Bowers et al., 2017; Osborn et al., 2002). Effective leaders must ensure they have the competencies necessary to effectively deal with crises (Harwati, 2013). Events that initially appear to be insignificant can have dire long term consequences (Birnbaum, 1992).

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This exploratory multiple-case study gathered data regarding Midwestern community college president's perceptions regarding leadership styles and behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conceptual framework, comprised of crisis leadership styles, effective leadership competencies, and crisis leadership competencies within the context of community college governance and the COVID-19 crisis, was utilized during both the data gathering and data analysis phases. Data were obtained through interviews and artifacts. Artifacts included items such as public COVID-19 sites and newsletters and emails from the president.

The import of the community college president's leadership has been recognized, when having an effectual community college president during a crisis substantially increases an institution's chances of securing a positive outcome (Muffet-Willet, 2010). Since minimal research has been conducted regarding crisis leadership response, this study provided insight regarding effective crisis leadership. Study results provided a framework for leadership best practices regarding campus crises.

Researcher Positionality

Regarding this study, my views about community college leadership during a crisis were heavily impacted by my personal experiences. I have worked as community college adjunct for more than 20 years and in the transportation industry for over 30 years. Notwithstanding my best efforts to ensure objectivity, I recognize my experiences as an adjunct may have influenced the way I collected and made meaning of the data during this research study. Moreover, like the rest of the world, I have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. I have been extremely fortunate and was spared from the extreme devastation of COVID-19, however the COVID-19 pandemic

has significantly impacted my world view. I readily recognize and acknowledge these experiences may have influenced my data interpretation. In terms of this research study, I am the investigator and I conducted all of the interviews. The utilization of a qualitative interview design imparts an objective methodology of data collection. Moreover, I took all the necessary steps to minimize researcher bias.

When I started on my doctoral journey, I spent a great deal of time and effort researching and reflecting on various dissertation topics. In terms of selecting a topic I wanted to leverage both my industry and adjunct experience. Finding a fascinating research topic where the research was not already completed was incredibly challenging. Finally, while reading a COVID-19 article, I had the sudden realization that I wanted to do research on people's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was intrigued with the COVID-19 pandemic and the often bizarre behaviors that occurred as a result. Who would have known that at one point in time toilet paper was actually more valuable than crude oil? Why were people buying so much toilet paper? One tiny virus had turned the entire world upside down. Unlike the financial crisis of 2008, we did not have any previous statistics or rules to guide us, thus making the COVID-19 situation a truly unique topic. I am not a news junkie, but due to COVID-19, I was passionately looking for news articles daily. The almost instantaneous worldwide impact and overall devastation of the virus was surreal. COVID-19 was influencing all aspects of daily living. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic is a watershed moment like 9/11. Focusing on the leadership and behaviors of community college presidents during the COVID-19 pandemic was a topic that blended both my industry and community college experience.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective is interpretivism, which is used in qualitative research and focuses on explanation and understanding (Goldkuhl, 2012). Under interpretivism information is subjective, culturally and historically based and also influenced by an individual's experiences. Thus, the researcher's thoughts impacted all aspects of obtaining, interpreting and analyzing data (Ryan, 2018). Society is filled with the meanings and wisdom of the individuals studied. Goldkuhl (2012) asserted, "The core idea of interpretivism is to work with these subjective meanings already there in the social world; that is to acknowledge their existence, to reconstruct them, to understand them, to avoid distorting them, to use them as building-blocks in theorizing" (p. 138).

Costelloe (2016) stated interpretivism had its beginnings in the 18th century with Giambattista Vico who declared there is a difference between the natural and social world, and that social experiences influence our version of reality and truth (as cited in Ryan, 2018). Max Weber was one of the interpretivism trailblazers (Crotty, 1998). Max Weber's (1978) *Verstehen* sociology promoted the subjective understanding of those being studied (as cited in Goldkuhl, 2012). William Dilthey built upon Weber's work (Crotty, 1998). Both Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey compared and contrasted *Verstehen* (understanding) and *Erklaren* (explaining) and recognized the need for a different method (Crotty, 1998). Interpretivism has been divided into three specific frameworks (symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics) (Bhattacharya, 2017). For this research, symbolic interactionism was used.

Some credit Herbert Blumer, who was heavily influenced by the work of George Herbert Mead, with the development of symbolic interactionism. George Herbert Mead subscribed to pragmatism and understanding the world objectively. With symbolic interactionism individual

behavior is based on meanings derived from social interactions (Crotty, 1998). Individuals may change meanings due to their perceptions or their experiences. A person's interactions with symbols creates meaning. The methodologies used with symbolic interactionism include ethnography, performative approaches, auto ethnography, interview studies, case studies, and arts-based approaches.

Research Questions

This research had a central research question and four sub-questions:

What are the perceptions of community college presidents of their leadership and decisions during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Research Sub-questions:

1. How did community college presidents describe any changes to their leadership style and behaviors during this crisis?
2. How did community college presidents describe the characteristics of leadership during this crisis?
3. How did community college presidents describe their initial administrative/leadership behaviors or steps they took early during this pandemic?
4. How did community college presidents describe the experience of community college governance during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative research methods were utilized for this research study. This research was an exploratory multiple-case study utilizing qualitative data collection. Case study is appropriate when the intent is to develop a deeper understanding (Creswell, 2007). A multiple-case study design was used due to its ability to find themes or patterns and make comparisons (Leedy &

Ormrod, 2005; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2009). Yin (2018) declared multiple-case study design may be preferable to single-case design since they provide multiple perspectives which can offer greater awareness and insight.

Multiple-Case Study

Case study was the chosen methodology due to its usefulness in better understanding a situation and its ability to investigate real-life phenomenon even when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are blurred (Giddings, 1924; Yin, 2018). According to Creswell (2013), case study research is a “qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 97). The goal of this research study is to understand community college presidents’ experiences during a crisis. This goal aligns with the primary characteristics of case study which is “describing, understanding, and explaining” (Hamel et al., 1993, p. 39). Bromley (1986) proclaimed that cases studies “get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can” (p. 23). Unlike traditional research, when using a case study approach the ability to generalize is not a goal (Hays, 2004). With case studies, the primary goal is to discover the unique aspects of each case (Hays, 2004).

This qualitative research utilized a multi-case study with five participants. According to Creswell (2013), case study research is an approach exploring real-life contemporary systems that are bounded. This research study used a conceptual framework incorporating crisis leadership styles, effective leadership competencies, and crisis leadership competencies within the context of community college governance and the COVID-19 crisis. Using this conceptual

framework, this study sought to obtain community college president's understanding of how their leadership style and behaviors had changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Population

This study used Midwestern community college presidents which are defined as public community colleges having enrollment of 10,000 or less and those operating on campus housing. This study focused on institutions offering associate's degrees as well as vocational training. Community colleges with multiple campus locations were included as long the institution operated on campus housing at one of the locations and the combined enrollment of all locations was less than 10,000. Tribal, private, technical colleges and trade schools were specifically excluded. There were a total of 32 community colleges in the population.

Sampling

For this study, purposeful sampling was used. Purposeful sampling involves the identification and selection of individuals who have substantial knowledge regarding a phenomenon, are willing and able to participate, and have some other characteristic that is vital to the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Patton, 2002). The goal of purposeful sampling is to focus on individuals who are best able to help with the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Patton, 2002). Using the purposeful sampling technique limits the population size and also limits the generalizability of the study findings (Creswell, 2003). Securing interview time with community college presidents was challenging. The presidents were contacted via email to determine their willingness to participate in the study. Stake (2006) asserted, "The benefits of multicase study will be limited if fewer than, say, 4 cases are chosen, or more than 10" (p. 22). A variety of purposeful sampling strategies can be used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This research used typical case sampling where the intent is to focus and describe the typical case (Patton, 2002). Looking for typical

cases helps add credence to conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Ten community college presidents volunteered and the first five who consented to participate in the research study were chosen.

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to starting this research, approval was obtained from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix C). The email to solicit participants also included the study purpose (Appendix D) and the informed consent form (Appendix E). Once the participant returned a signed informed consent form, a follow up email was sent to schedule the interview. All interviews were conducted by the researcher. To protect the identities of individuals and places, the interviewees were assigned pseudonyms and gender neutral pronouns. The names of the institutions were not included. Participants were informed they could discontinue study participation at any time.

Interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom videoconferencing. Only the audio portion of the zoom videoconferencing was retained for transcription purposes. Zoom recordings were deleted from the Zoom cloud storage once the audio file had been downloaded. All data are stored on a password-protected computer. All paper documents were stored in a fireproof lock box. In addition, the data are stored on Kansas State University and personal one drive sites that are password protected. Only the researcher had access to this data which will be kept in a secure locked computer for three years. After that time period all recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

Pilot Study

Prior to performing the full-scale study, a pilot study is often conducted to assess the study's data collection methods and research design (Yin, 2009). With an approved IRB for a

course, a pilot study was conducted on the interview questions with a community college president. The pilot followed the same procedural steps that were expected to be followed in the full study. This included an overview of the study, an IRB informed consent form, and an advance copy of the interview protocol. Additionally, with the participant's permission, the interview was recorded so that the researcher could provide the participant a verbatim transcript. The participant then had the opportunity to clarify or change any comments previously made (Ryan et al., 2009). This interview provided firsthand experience in using the interview format. Based on the interview, the interview protocol was modified. Some questions were re-worded, the question order was changed, and some questions were added. Having the questions in advance seemed particularly helpful for the participant.

After the proposal defense and IRB approval, another pilot interview was conducted with an executive level community college leader. As a result of the interview, no changes were made to the interview protocol. Using the artifact protocol, an artifact review was also conducted to practice the artifact review and data collection processes.

Data Collection

For this research study, data were collected through the use of interviews and artifacts. deMarrais (2004) asserted interviews provide a wealth of data in case study research and generally are the most important type of data to be collected. The main method of data collection were semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews were used since they provided the researcher the opportunity to better understand the participants' experiences due to their ability to explore impromptu topics (Kahlke, 2014; Ryan et al., 2009). Moreover, interviews provide crucial details of behaviors as well as insight into their feelings, opinions and real-life experiences (Lichtman, 2012; Roberts, 2004).

In the emails, letters and videos, the presidents discussed the import of safety for their faculty, staff, students and the community. The presidents kept everyone informed of progress regarding safety measures and protocols. The artifacts demonstrated the presidents’ concern not only for their stakeholders’ physical but also their mental health. These leaders provided inventive ways to assist their faculty and staff’s mental outlook. The presidents continuously complimented the efforts of their faculty and staff. Communication messaging often included positive news regarding student, staff or college successes which helped to counteract some of the negativity surrounding the pandemic. Moreover, the presidents sent encouraging and supporting messages reminding everyone this situation will not last forever. In addition, Table 1 presents an overview of the raw data that were collected and analyzed during the study.

Table 1

Data Inventory

Source of data	Number of pages	Number of pages total
2 interviews with each participant (first interview 60 minutes; second interview 60 minutes)	29 pages per participant (average)	145 pages
Artifacts each participant	74 pages per participant (average)	370 pages
Total pages		515 pages

The study lasted 17 weeks with study participants being engaged for approximately eight weeks of that time period. Appendix F provides a study timeline. Ensuring the data approaches align with the research questions is essential. Gathering data is time consuming and the interview time was limited. It was imperative data were gathered to address the primary research question and the sub-questions. A research alignment table was created to verify alignment between the data collection efforts and the research questions (Appendix G).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews of five Midwestern community college presidents were conducted. To assist the interviewing process an interview protocol (Appendix A) was developed. The questions were created to ensure the research questions were appropriately covered using the instrument. Although the researcher mainly used the interview protocol, this format did allow for some deviation as long as the questions were relevant to the study (Bhattacharya, 2017). The researcher primarily followed the interview protocol (Appendix A) to allow for comparison consistency across both the participants and the questions (Bhattacharya, 2017). Participants were provided an advance copy of the interview questions.

The interview questions were tested for validation and bias (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). Field testing is essential to ensure the interview questions obtain the information desired for the study (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). According to Roberts (2004), interview questions should be reviewed to ensure the instructions and wording are easily understood and cannot be misconstrued. The questions were also evaluated in terms of length and convenience (Roberts, 2004). More importantly, it is important the questions illicit sufficient detail from the interviewees (Roberts, 2004).

Due to travel distances, all participants were interviewed using Zoom videoconferencing. This research study data relied on self-reported information obtained from the interviews. The ability to obtain meaningful data can be influenced by the type of technology utilized during the interview (Archibald et al., 2019). Use of Zoom videoconferencing may have impacted the researcher's ability to develop rapport as well as the individual's responses (Archibald et al., 2019). While some individuals are comfortable using Zoom videoconferencing, others may feel more comfortable meeting face-to-face (Archibald, 2019). Several researchers conducting semi-

structured interviews had interview sessions that lasted between 45-60 minutes (Lefler et al., 2018; Salbach et al., 2009; Vianden, 2009). The time allocated for conducting the semi-structured interviews for this study was 60 minutes for each interview. Participants were interviewed two times. The interviews were recorded via Zoom videoconferencing with the participants' permission. This enabled the researcher to obtain a verbatim transcript that could be shared with the participant. The participant then had the opportunity to clarify or change any comments previously made through member checking.

Artifacts

Although interviews were the primary sources of information, artifacts such as public COVID-19 websites or newsletters and emails from the president were also used and played a vital role in the data collection process (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The researcher analyzed each college's website. Additionally, some of the presidents provided some newsletters, emails and videos which helped provide corroborating evidence from another source (Yin, 2018). Moreover, stated Creswell (2009), artifacts provide information using the participant's own words. Yin (2009) declared "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence" (p. 170). By using multiple sources of evidence, such as archival data, documents, and interviews, a researcher can investigate a greater range of issues (Yin, 2009). Unfortunately, not all documents may be publicly available (Creswell, 2009). In an attempt to gather communications related to the pandemic, artifact data were collected for the time period between March 2020 and December 2021. Including newsletters, emails, letters, videos, and website information, approximately 185 artifacts containing community college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic were examined.

Data Analysis

Hatch (2002) asserted data analysis is a methodological pursuit for meaning. Data analysis, according to Creswell (2007), “consists of preparing and organizing the data...for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion” (p. 180). Data analysis is a way to organize the data so that patterns, themes, relationships, and interpretations can be made (Hatch, 2002). Regarding case studies, “our primary task is to come to understand the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 77). Stake (1995) declared there is not a precise time when the data analysis process begins. Stake (1995) furthered, “Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations” (p. 71). In other words, we can start analyzing the moment we look at an artifact, or the first time we see an individual. Analysis and interpretation are all components of the sense making (Stake, 1995).

The researcher’s goal was to provide detailed accounts of Midwestern community college president’s leadership and behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher perceived this could be realized by examining the crisis experiences for patterns and themes. Stake (1995) asserted through the process of meaning making we are looking for patterns. This often requires we must review text or artifacts multiple times to find the meaning (Stake, 1995). Although there may be something important from a single occurrence, often the greater meanings are obtained from the patterns. Patterns, or themes, were the primary focus for meaning making. In addition to interview data, artifacts were utilized to help confirm interpretations.

The researcher took great care protecting the research data. Immediately after the Zoom interviews, only the audio recording was retained for transcription purposes. The researcher then manually transcribed the interviews into word documents prior to analysis. The interview

transcripts and artifact documents were then analyzed. The data analysis process followed Creswell's (2007) seven step process for case study analysis:

1. Construct and organize data files
2. Review text, make comments, create initial codes
3. Describe the case and context
4. Categorical aggregations for establishing themes and patterns
5. Direct interpretation
6. Create naturalistic generalizations
7. Describe the case and context

To further elaborate on these steps, first, data obtained from interviews and artifacts were organized into computer files (Creswell, 2007). The files were broken down into sentence text units for analysis purposes (Creswell, 2007). These sentence text units were categorized by research question, interview question, and respondent. By using excel and placing the text in columns and rows, the researcher could easily move codes to find patterns and themes.

Additionally, by using sentence fragments and excel, the data and its meaning could be closely examined.

In step two, after reviewing the transcripts and capturing the sentence fragments, the coding process began (Creswell, 2007). The initial codes are shown in Appendix H. By creating the initial codes, it assisted in developing an overall sense of the information. Additionally, while reading the transcripts and artifacts, notes were taken. Notes or comments included any ideas or concepts that came to mind while examining the data (Creswell, 2007). Following the reading and note taking, the researcher started the "describing, classifying, and interpreting loop" (Creswell, 2007, p. 151). This was an iterative process which meant the notes and transcripts

were read multiple times. Agar (1980) recommended researchers “read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole” (p. 103). Following several “describing, classifying, and interpreting loop[s]” (Creswell, 2007, p. 151), the codes were continually reviewed and refined. The codes were consolidated into categories which resulted in the creation of themes. For example, the codes diverse perspectives, political influence, evolving protocols, and government funds were combined into the governance category. Each category was aligned with the research questions. The revised coding structure which displays the categories, themes and sub-themes is shown in Appendix I.

Step three entailed describing the case and the setting (Creswell, 2007). The case and setting descriptions helped provide important context. This context provided essential background to make the codes more meaningful.

While in step four instances were aggregated with the intent of seeing an emerging pattern, in step five direct interpretation focused on single instances (Creswell, 2013). The researcher examined single instances and attempted to make meaning from them. In addition, the researcher looked for possible connections between categories. By looking at both multiple and single instances, the researcher can make sense of the data in “more meaningful ways” (Creswell, 2013, p. 199).

Step six involved the creation of naturalistic generalizations after analyzing the data (Creswell, 2013). Naturalistic generalizations refers to the lessons learned from the case study. The researcher compared and contrasted the lessons learned with previous publications.

Finally, in step seven, the researcher provided the complete picture of the case (Creswell, 2013). The analysis was organized by question, which is advantageous since participants were asked similar questions and thus comparisons could be made (Patton, 2002). This included a case

overview, description of the themes, and lessons learned. In addition, the information was compared to published literature (Creswell, 2013).

In addition to within-case comparisons, cross-case comparisons were also conducted. A case-based approach was used to ensure the case integrity was maintained (Yin, 2018). After preliminary conclusions were made regarding the within-case patterns, the next step was reviewing for “replicative relationships across the case studies” (Yin, 2018, p. 196). Similar to the within-case analysis, cross-case analysis was done using an inductive approach (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) declared the importance of thinking “upward conceptually, rather than downward into the domain of individual variables” (p. 197). Cross-case synthesis must include an analysis of the degree of case compatibility, including any possible differences that could impact case compatibility (Yin, 2018). Any significant case differences that could potentially undermine the multi-case findings were examined. Yin (2018) asserted the challenge of cross-case analysis is knowing “how to develop strong, plausible, and fair arguments that are supported by your data” (pp. 198-199). This must include any alternative case interpretations (Yin, 2018).

All data analysis was conducted by the researcher. The raw data were reviewed with an open mind looking for several potential explanations (Stake, 1995). In addition to interview data, artifacts were utilized to help confirm interpretations, a critical component of triangulation (Stake, 1995). A narrative summary was developed to describe the major findings.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research seeks for deep understanding that arises from talking with participants, considerable field time, and the use of probing questions to acquire thorough meaning (Creswell, 2013). Following the data collection process, Creswell (2013) asserted researchers must ask themselves two crucial questions: “Is the account valid, and by whose

standards?” and “How do we evaluate the quality of qualitative research?” (p. 243). There are many perspectives regarding validity and qualitative research. Creswell (2013) recommended using at least two of nine potential validation strategies to demonstrate validity and authenticity:

1. “Prolonged engagement and persistent observation”
2. “Peer review or debriefing”
3. “Triangulation”
4. “Negative case analysis”
5. “Clarifying researcher bias”
6. “Member checking”
7. “Thick, rich description”
8. “External audits”
9. “Disconfirming evidence” (pp. 250-252).

For this research study, four validation strategies were used: “member checking,” “thick, rich description,” “triangulation” and “clarifying researcher bias” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 250-252).

Member Checking

With member checking, the researcher seeks the interviewee’s viewpoint regarding the authenticity of both the findings and the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking, “whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholder groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Member checking services serves several purposes:

- It is an opportunity for the interviewee to “assess intentionality,” what they meant when they provided particular information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

- The interviewee has the opportunity to remedy errors and to correct what they perceive are incorrect interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Interviewees have the opportunity to provide additional information that they did not mention initially (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- The member checking process “puts the respondent on record” for having stated particular items and agreeing with the accuracy of the interviewer’s recollection and interpretation. This makes it harder for the interviewee to profess interviewer error at a later date (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Member checking presents an essential opportunity to summarize (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Member checking offers interviewees the chance to assess overall sufficiency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

With member checking, it is imperative to provide participants the opportunity to provide feedback. Participants were sent a copy of the interview transcript to review and return to the researcher prior to data analysis beginning to allow for any miscommunication to be clarified. Three participants made very minor changes to their interview transcript while two participants made no changes.

Rich, Thick Description

Precise and specific recollections of Midwestern community college president’s leadership and behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic were documented in the data collection phase of the research. Through the use of sufficient detail, readers become immersed in the qualitative data enabling the reader to feel they were a part of the experience. Rich, thick description provided essential information regarding transferability due to the in-depth

descriptions provided of the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Due to the meticulous description, the researcher provided readers the necessary information to ascertain whether findings could be transferred to other settings “because of shared characteristics” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 32). According to Abma and Stake (2014), “a thick description reveals participants’ meanings and context” (p. 1152).

Triangulation

Ensuring accurate and thorough descriptions of phenomena is essential in qualitative research (Stake, 1995). In addition to discipline, appropriate protocols must be established to ensure accurate findings. According to Stake (1995), “in qualitative research, those protocols come under the name ‘triangulation’ ” (p. 107). Different protocols can be utilized to increase the interpretation’s credibility. Although there are different types of triangulation, this research study focused on method triangulation. According to Polit and Beck (2012), method triangulation is using several methods of data collection for the same phenomenon. Commonly used in qualitative research, method triangulation can entail interviews, observations, artifact analysis and field notes (Carter et al., 2014; Guion, 2002). For this research study data were collected through interviews and artifacts. Approximately 185 artifacts were examined which included community college president communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. This included information from public COVID-19 sites as well as newsletters, emails, and videos from the president. Information was triangulated using the same set of research questions. Website information and college documents were used since they are official organization documents. Artifact information was used to help corroborate information obtained during the interviews and to add credibility to the findings and help establish external validity (Guion, 2002). According to

Yin (2009), by using external evidence to confirm data collected, it helps establish case study reliability.

Clarifying Researcher Bias

Since I was the main data collection instrument, it was imperative I identify any potential personal values and biases (Creswell, 1994). Rubin and Rubin (2005) asserted the interviewing approach recognizes that interviewers develop unique styles. An interviewer's style, according to Rubin and Rubin (2005), influence "how they interpret what they hear" (p. 18). Through critical self-reflection, interviewers are then less inclined to impose their viewpoints onto the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Thus, it is important to clearly explain my position and any biases that could potentially impact my research study (Merriam, 1998).

My interviewing style focused on establishing a good, personal rapport. Realizing executives with hectic schedules would be interviewed, I maximized the interview without exceeding the 60 minute timeframe. I recognized the importance of balancing efficiency and using a conversational tone to put the participants at ease. I did not want the experience to feel like an interrogation, but rather a reprieve from their normal routine.

In addition to reflecting on my interviewing style, I also pondered any potential biases. Regarding my background, I worked as a community college adjunct for more than 20 years. In addition, I have been employed in the transportation industry for over 30 years. Although I worked at a community college part time, it significantly influenced me both personally and professionally. Interviewers must recognize their biases and how they can potentially impact interviewees and the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Silverman, 2007; Stake, 2005). By using personal reflexivity, I attempted to minimize the impact of my personal beliefs and any potential impact on knowledge production.

Summary

For this research I used an exploratory multiple-case study using qualitative data collection. Multiple-case study is advantageous since it can provide different perspectives as well as the ability to find patterns and make comparisons. I interviewed five community college presidents. I allocated 60 minutes for the semi-structured interviews. Artifacts produced by the community college presidents for the time period between March 2020 through December 2021, were also collected. These artifacts helped confirm interpretations. Data analysis utilized a case based approach to ensure case integrity. An inductive approach was used for both the within-case and cross-case analysis. To ensure validity, I used the following four strategies: member checking, thick, rich description, triangulation, and clarifying researcher bias. My research study's purpose is to understand any changes in Midwestern community college administrator's behaviors and leadership styles due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Introduction

The study is driven primarily by one question regarding community college presidents understanding how their leadership style and behaviors have changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter discusses the context concerning the conditions influencing participants at the time of study, participant demographics and competencies, findings of the research, and a summary.

Research Questions

The research is guided by one central research question and four sub-questions. What are the perceptions of community college presidents of their leadership and decisions during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic? The four research sub-questions are:

1. How do community college presidents describe any changes to their leadership style and behaviors during this crisis?
2. How do community college presidents describe the characteristics of leadership during this crisis?
3. How do community college presidents describe their initial administrative/leadership behaviors or steps they took early during this pandemic?
4. How do community college presidents describe the experience of community college governance during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Participant Demographics

There were five participants in this research study. All the participants were working in their first community college presidency position. Four had been in their position for 5-9 years while one held the position for less than three years. All held doctoral degrees with each having

worked for many years in education although their paths to the presidency varied. Some had extensive backgrounds in secondary education as well as business and industry. In terms of campus size, four of the colleges had enrollment ranging between 2,000 – 3,000 students while the fifth had an enrollment around 5,000 students. Three colleges are located in towns with a population ranging between 5,000 – 10,000 residents, while the other two are located in towns with populations ranging between 25,000 – 30,000 residents. All colleges were in the Midwest and had on-site college controlled residence halls.

Findings

Each participant is a unit analysis or a case. Using the interview data and document analysis, a description of their leadership style, competencies and leadership behaviors and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic follow.

Case 1: Parker

Parker is a self-proclaimed servant leader and has been leading the small rural community college for seven years. The leadership competencies important to him/her in a crisis are good communication skills, positivity, resiliency, adaptability, honesty, empathy and emotional intelligence. He/she first heard of COVID-19 in January 2020 and became immersed in the situation in a small rural community college.

Servant Leadership Style

Before and during the pandemic Parker's leadership philosophy did not change. He/she put the needs of others ahead of his/her own self interests. His/her decisions were made based on his/her moral views of right and wrong. "I'm a firm believer if you do the right thing you'll get the right results whether it's immediate or takes time..." Parker demonstrated this competency of serving others. "As we go through and approach this day by day, the most important thing we are

doing is still serving students, serving each other.” His/her leadership vision for himself/herself and his/her team emphasized service. Parker wanted all his/her constituents to understand that he/she and his/her team were “...willing to serve;...willing to help.” When people are not being served, he/she is concerned. “When we’re not serving people like we should it really bothers me.”

Parker is concerned about the community as well. “You still have a duty of care to all of these people. Just move forward and take care of everybody else.” The college “distributed 175,000 lbs. of food during the pandemic.” The college employees “personally unloaded [the food].” Parker stated, “I’ve been a part of every one of those deals [and]...have come out and given food to the community. We [also] gave hand sanitizers and masks to the community.” He/she recognized the impact the college has on the community. “If we get this wrong, I’ll get fired but life will go on and I’ll do something different.” Parker remarked,

What’s the thing that keeps me up at night the most it is that we are an economic driver in such a small community. You take away 150 full time jobs in our area, if for any reason the college makes a miscalculation a misstep and we’re no longer here, property valuations in...County are worth nothing.

His/her priority during the pandemic was focused on keeping his/her constituents safe. Parker stated, “...we wanted everyone to know how critically important they were. We wanted them to understand we will do everything we can within reason to make certain we are keeping everyone safe and that includes students, employees and the community.” Regarding the operational plans Parker stated,

...again, just trying to go through and make the best of a bad situation trying to figure out what do we do to keep people safe as we went through and looked at everything

operationally that was always paramount in every decision we made. What would it take to keep people safe?

Safety was important. Parker stated, "...obviously safety is the chief concern." He/she commented, "Every decision we make we want to ensure we kept everyone's safety paramount with any decision that came across our desk." Parker was willing to make changes to ensure safety. "If it is not a safe place to be we are going to change our operational plan."

While being dedicated to serving others, Parker displayed humility which is another competency of servant leadership. Parker would complete any task to ensure student needs were met. He/she remarked, "I openly told people if we need to serve students [meals] in the dorms I'll do it, it's not a problem."

Parker showcased his/her stewardship skills through his/her willingness to be the last person on campus. Parker stated,

If someone has to bear that burden it should be me. As the highest paid person at the college, I believe I should carry that burden. The person getting the most amount of money needs to do it; they need to take ownership. I firmly believe that and as the pandemic ensued I always said as an employee I'll be the last one to leave.

Parker displayed his/her stewardship skills when he/she wanted everyone to be invested in the mission. "It speaks to the fact the mission to serve students is well understood amongst all of our employees and is something we all subscribe to. And as you think about that leadership perspective I want everyone to be invested."

Parker cultivated a culture based on mutual respect. He/she demonstrated his/her ability to persuade others without using the power of his/her position.

I think if you knew the culture of our campus you would understand this better, but I've always said this if I ask someone to do something it's based on a mutual level of respect and based on what's best for the college. If they do this because [I] made this request I have failed as a leader. I firmly believe that [what] we do is based on respect not based on position. If anyone leads by position it's probably a recipe for disaster.

Parker valued the people at the college. He/she recognized the importance of his/her employees and their achievements. He/she commented,

The only thing I want you to know is we didn't do this with one individual person. We did this as a campus. So, the successes we've experienced they're not attributed to any one individual. It's really been all of us collectively coming together...I can't overstate that enough.

Similar recognition occurred in one of his/her newsletter communications where he/she stated, "I am extremely grateful to our faculty for their dedication and effort to do this as smoothly as possible to help ensure student success." In another newsletter, Parker discussed the importance of every employee.

I think all of our individuals, all of our employees have to know how special they are not only to the college but to the students. Every one of these individuals makes this wheel turn and without any one of them [the college is] not what we are.

Furthering this sense of community, employee's paychecks were kept whole despite enrollment and funding concerns. Parker stated, "we made a firm pact that we would keep every employee's paycheck whole even though we were working remotely. You start talking about your custodial all the way to your maintenance staff." He/she recognized there would be questions regarding paying all employees while working remotely.

I know there was a lot of financial concerns not knowing what enrollment was going to do. We immediately budgeted to be down 10%. So, then if you start thinking about it you'll have some personnel who are essentially non-essential personnel. Why are you going to continue to pay them?

He/she was concerned for the employees.

They could be literally tied to the land. If they don't work at the college what do they do professionally? That takes on a different weight, that takes on a different enormity that bothered me more so than just about anything that we were going through.

There had been minimal employee turnover.

We experienced very little involuntary turnover. I don't want to give you a false illusion that we haven't had to make some stops along the journey and let some people off the bus, we have. But I think if you go through it and think about it in a town this size, to keep the type of people we have and to attract the kind of people we have.

In addition, demonstrating the competency of interpersonal acceptance, Parker was cognizant that college employees seek these careers for reasons other than the paycheck. Interpersonal acceptance includes the ability to understand the perspectives and feelings of others. "You have a group of individuals with a shared vision, who are like minded and want to serve and I think that's something all leaders should think about..." Parker continued,

So, you're asking for people to be a part of something bigger than themselves and maybe take a lesser wage with more responsibility. That's something I've always been extremely cognizant of especially as we've gone through this pandemic because I believe we have a huge level of COVID-19 fatigue that has set in.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he/she was focused on progression and the future. “I mean we’re so fortunate we’ve done a lot of projects on campus. We just opened a...center that’s open to the community.” His/her forward outlook still focused on service. What do you “need to do to change to better serve those in the situation and to have a positive outcome?” Parker reiterated his/her emphasis on forward progression. “I’m such a firm believer if you’re not progressing you’re regressing. There’s no such thing as stagnation. Colleges just don’t stagnate and stay here; the needle is either moving forward or backward.”

Parker gets excited when he/she thinks about how the college provided individuals the opportunity for a better life. “We give people an opportunity to make a better life. And every day I think about that I get energized.” He/she continued,

You know as well as anyone in higher education for some it’s a job for some it’s a career and for me personally it’s a lifestyle. I’m such a firm believer that we have an opportunity to do the greatest thing in the world to help educate others.

Competencies Important for Leaders

Parker believes the most important leadership competencies are good communication skills, positivity, resiliency, adaptability, honesty, empathy and emotional intelligence. Regarding communication, he/she stated, “I believe as intelligent people we should be informed.” Parker thought, “positivity, that drive directly affects leadership.” Based on his/her “personal experience” it was important to “keep it going forward, just keep being resilient.” He/she also felt adaptability was important. “I don’t know what normal looks like anymore, but I can tell you if you’re not willing to adapt or if you’re not willing to take on new challenges you’re not going to make it.” Additionally, leaders needed to be empathetic. He/she said, “...being empathetic, I think those serve leaders well in these types of situations...” It was also

essential to be honest. Parker commented, “And...just being honest with people is important.” Additionally, it was imperative to have emotional intelligence. Parker commented, “...I have a generally high aptitude and I think that’s how I’ve been able to do some of the things I’ve been able to do in life. I have a decent social, emotional intelligence.”

Good Communication Skills

Parker believes leaders should have good communication skills. He/she used “a model of constant communication.” Parker provided “updates multiple times per week to all...employees.” He/she provided “at least two updates per week to the Board of Trustees just letting them know what the college has going on.” He/she commented,

But I do have a duty of care to ensure everyone stays informed...You have to communicate with the students, you have to communicate with the employees, you have to communicate with the community, and you have to communicate with your immediate supervisor, the Board of Trustees.

He/she believes in the “critical importance of communication and just continuously communicating.”

Positivity

Parker believes in the power of positivity. Parker discussed his/her positive outlook when he/she stated, “every day is a gift.” Throughout the pandemic, his/her focus remained on serving students and each other. His/her communication was always positive. In newsletters he/she commented, “I know we are looking forward to a brighter tomorrow,” and “we are all one day closer to some good news.” In other newsletters he/she said, “We hope everyone is staying safe and doing well,” and “this is a challenging and unique time, but we will get through it together.” He/she displayed positivity during the pandemic. Parker commented,

In these times of uncertainty, I continue to reflect on how fortunate I am to be in this community. At the college, I have the opportunity to interact with many different individuals and businesses. The one thing that remains constant throughout all of the change is the resolve and willingness to help. I still think about the advice I received at the beginning of the pandemic, that we all one day closer to some better news. I still 100% believe that and feel like we are getting closer.

When asked if he/she believes positivity separates leaders from non-leaders, Parker stated, 100%, I mean the only thing we can control in our life is our attitude. We can't dictate circumstances; we can't dictate things that are external sources of control. All we can do is control our internal locus of control.

Resiliency

In addition to the power of positivity, Parker thought it was important to have resiliency. He/she commented, "I feel like I experienced a lot of things in life that I'm more resilient than the average person." He/she noticed during the pandemic there was a lot of people who do not have that same mentality...When a roadblock comes up or an obstacle comes in the way, they shut down. I can't do this I'm not going to do this, but this is where we are. I've never felt this way.

Others view things differently. He/she recognized that "just because [he/she] view[s] the world from one frame of reference, or one lens doesn't mean everyone else should." It is imperative, however, to continue moving forward. Showing resiliency, the college "built two buildings in the middle of the pandemic" and "raised \$3.5 million dollars" in a small town "during a pandemic. It's just cool stuff." Demonstrating resiliency, Parker commented, I've told somebody before if you can break my spirit, I don't have a lot of hope for where it's at. I've never meet anyone who

has a better outlook than me...If you don't want to come with us I'm going to help pull you along. That's honestly a mentality.

Displaying resiliency in a newsletter, Parker commented, "These are challenging times, but as always, I am impressed by the resolve and attitudes of individuals in [the area]." During the pandemic, the college completed several key projects. Parker stated,

I've been here for seven years and the last couple of years have been very challenging. But just because they've been challenging doesn't mean they haven't been enjoyable. I mean we're so fortunate we've done a lot of projects on campus. We just opened a [building]...that's open to the community...the show still goes on.

Everyone must move forward. Parker remarked, "we got to steer this ship we've got to keep it going forward, just keep being resilient." Resiliency is important to success. He/she related,

The grit in resiliency is what makes people successful. I think everyone experiences some level of adversity in life and we've all felt adversity throughout this pandemic. We've all felt challenges. But I think you have to keep being resilient knowing you're going to put one foot in front of the other and keep moving forward whether you want to or not.

Parker stated challenges can be turned into opportunities.

Every unique challenge presents a unique opportunity. If we want to feel sorry for ourselves and throw a pity party we can do that, no one's going to care. So, when we have a duty of care to move forward and try to help as many people as we can. I would much rather look you in the face and say...let's do this. We have all these things we want to accomplish let's move forward if we don't it's not going to end well for us. You have to continue to evolve.

It is essential to “review the situation and figure out what” must be “change[d] to better serve those in the situation and to have a positive outcome.”

Adaptability

For Parker, adaptability was a crucial leadership competency. In terms of adaptability Parker stated, “I don’t know what normal looks like anymore, but I can tell you if you’re not willing to adapt or if you’re not willing to take on new challenges you’re not going to make it.” He/she said, “If I had to go through and say the three things, your adaptability, your attitude, and your resiliency, I think that’s what really shapes [your leadership].” Using adaptability, Parker recognized the need to adjust to the new situation.

In my personal opinion I’m not an epidemiologist, this is an endemic situation we’re going to have to figure out how to live with this. Is it going to be different? Sure. Is life still going to go on? Yeah. Are we still tasked with providing quality education and an enjoyable college experience 100%.

Regarding adaptability, Parker commented, “You have to continue to evolve. I think the other main characteristic has to be adaptability. Is this situation different, yeah it’s different. When is it going to go back to normal? I don’t know.”

Empathy

Another critical leadership competency is empathy. Parker stated, ...I think from that empathetic side what I realized from this pandemic and as this pandemic has continued to go on now, we have a lot of people who do not have that same mentality. When a roadblock comes up or an obstacle comes in the way they shut down. I can’t do this I’m not going to do this, but this is where we are. I’ve never felt this way. I

think empathy is so critical. Just because I view the world from one frame of reference, or one lens doesn't mean everyone else should.

Honesty

Being honest is also crucial. Parker said, "And just being genuine, just being honest with people is important." Parker, however realized his/her desire to keep his/her faculty and staff continually informed regarding the pandemic may not have always been "the best thing to do." Parker stated, "So maybe I would have cut back on some of the communication, but it really goes against the grain for me to want to do that." He/she "always want[ed] to be honest and upfront with people but at times" that "create[d] a sense of angst."

Emotional Intelligence

Parker indicated another competency which shapes your leadership is your aptitude or emotional intelligence. Parker stated, in addition to "your adaptability, your attitude, and your resiliency" shaping your leadership,

And maybe your aptitude as well. I'm not an intelligent person but I think I have a generally high aptitude and I think that's how I've been able to do some of the things I've been able to do in life. I have a decent social, emotional intelligence.

Initial Administrative Behaviors at the Beginning of Pandemic

Parker first heard about COVID-19 in early January 2020. He/she forwarded the information to the college's student health nurse and asked to have the information disseminated to students. Parker commented, "not knowing that it would ever turn into anything like it has." The situation became real when he/she was attending a council of presidents meeting. All of the college state presidents were in attendance. During the meeting, a state university announced they were shifting to remote operations. Recalling the day, Parker thought about the Alan

Jackson song, *Where Were You the Day the World Stopped Turning* (Jackson, 2002). Thinking about the events of that day, Parker stated,

It was one of the strangest feelings for me. As people went around the room, you know you have your cohort of individuals you talk to a lot, I thought they were full of crap, why would they do that? This seems like such an overreaction there isn't near enough information to make that type of decision. And soon you start to see the dominoes fall one by one by one.

The large college's announcement they were moving to remote learning was significant because this university, had "a lot of clout, a lot of weight." Parker commented,

then you just see that slow reaction from everybody that oh gosh this is really the way this is trending...I vividly remember this as well because we had people travelling and going to different events. The...[event] was that day, and I called the...coach and said we will not be participating. We're trying to figure out what is going on. I remember our...coach being so upset with us saying [our college] would be the only one not participating in the...[event]. I said well that's fine. These are the decisions we have to make.

He/she focused on keeping everyone safe.

All of our coaches were so frustrated, so upset, but again just trying to go through and make the best of a bad situation trying to figure out what do we do to keep people safe.

As we went through and looked at everything operationally that was always paramount in every decision we made. What would it take to keep people safe?

Shifted to Remote Learning

The decision was made to extend March 2020 spring break so courses could be shifted to an online modality. A task-force was created to oversee the transition to remote learning. A consultant was hired to ensure faculty had the necessary support. In addition, Parker engaged multiple stakeholders to assist in the development of a tiered operational plan. The key concern was ensuring the safety of students, faculty, staff, and the community.

So, from there the college immediately initiated an operational plan that focused on what would we do. How many individuals would we have reporting to campus? We essentially did this in a tiered capacity, to where if and when this occurred the college would do this, if this occurred the college would do this.

He/she received questions regarding “how some classes [would] transition to an online modality.” He/she stated the “College [had to] contact each respective accrediting body to seek permission to shift online.” One of the challenges of the operational plan was directly related to the size of the college.

We had gone through and had limited office time for employees, but [the college] is so small...We have several areas that are singular points of failure...We cross train we do different things, but we don't have the luxury of having 5-8 person departments. We have multiple departments of one...I can tell you at one point on campus we wound up with four people on our entire campus. That was our president and vice presidents, we never left.

In a newsletter he/she commented, “The month of March 2020 was one of the strangest months of my life, and I imagine that is the case for most people. This situation has evolved at such a dynamic pace and require unprecedented action.” Since only Parker and his/her leadership team

were on campus he/she instituted what he/she referred to as “COVID casual.” He/she recalled how strange it was working on an empty campus.

I remember one day, walking between our buildings, and nobody was here. We had a flock of wild turkeys on our campus; it was almost like the animals were taking it back over. It was kind of surreal as you go through and look at it. But it was just a really, really odd time to go through.

Return to Face-to-Face Learning

Parker discussed the college’s return to face-to-face learning. The college had “a traditional but condensed fall semester” beginning August 17, 2020. Online courses continued as usual. All other fall courses transitioned “to mainly an online format with a limited number of face-to-face courses. Specific technical programs [continued] to follow their regular schedule and class modalities; however, program directors will provide additional guidance. Development to the current situation are monitored daily.” Face-to-face courses “finished by Thanksgiving and students [did] not return to campus until the Spring 2021 Semester.”

Communication

Parker used a variety of communication mediums including emails, letters, radio, videos and the web to communicate to faculty, staff, students and the community. In a newsletter he/she stated, the college “had been communicating with students regarding the COVID-19 virus since the end of January [2020].” Due to the importance of communication, a COVID-19 section was added to the college website to help keep everyone informed. “If you look at [our] website right now you can see our COVID-19 numbers, how many active cases we have on campus.” The COVID-19 website information was updated daily. In addition to the website information, Parker communicated regularly with his/her stakeholders. Parker “had at least 27 touchpoints [of

communication] every month with all of [his/her] employees.” His/her communications were heavily infused with positivity using words such as “hope,” “good news,” “brighter tomorrow,” “fortunate,” “gratitude,” “wonderful,” and “future.” Parker utilized predictable communication to ensure all constituents were well informed. Referencing his/her communication philosophy, he/she stated,

So, I think that is a critical takeaway from this just the critical importance of communication and just continuously communicating. I think people need to know that communication is going to be constant and somewhat predictable. When I say predictable I talk about the McDonald’s model of consistency.

Parker discussed his/her communication model which was twice weekly communications to all employees. Regarding the communication Parker commented,

[The newsletters] come out at the exact same time. That’s very purposeful and predictable. When my employees check their email on Friday morning at 8 AM they’re going to have all the updates for the week. When they check their email at 11 AM on Monday they’re going to have all the campus goings on for that week and then Friday will be a summation of what’s going on next week.

Regarding communication some employees told him

I don’t read your updates...[Parker] said I’m sorry I don’t understand. Do you want me to come to your office and let you know what’s going on? [The employee] said no that’s not reasonable. I completely agree with you that’s not sustainable. But if you don’t want to take advantage of all the other communication avenues I don’t know how I can help.

Regarding the communications, Parker commented, “I’m just trying to ensure that [they’re] in the know.” Similarly, Parker sent weekly emails to students. “I emailed students every Friday with every COVID-19 update I could find.” He/she stated,

All of this information we have promoted from the onset to go through and ensure people this is a safe place to be. If it is not a safe place to be we are going to change our operational plan.

Communication with his/her board was also critical. Parker discussed an operational plan that was initially sent to students.

I sent out one operational plan after I had already sent it to students. Normally I always send it to the board first as an FYI, so they have it in advance. I had two board members who wanted me to walk it back and we didn’t do that. They just let me know they didn’t appreciate seeing it after the students did, so just curtailing some of that communication and making sure you’re going through all the proper communication channels.

Parker “provide[d] at least two updates per week to the Board of Trustees just letting them know what the college has going on.” Additionally, “Out of respect for the board [Parker sent] all of [the college’s] operational plans to [the board] just so whenever they are in the community they are not blind sighted.” Although this is very time consuming, he/she felt it was essential and “it pays dividends.” Looking back, Parker questioned if he/she should have minimized some of the communication.

As soon as I get information I would disseminate it to everybody. I don’t know if that’s always the best thing to do because although you always want to be honest and upfront with people but at times that can create a sense of angst.

Parker underscored the “critical importance of communication and just continuously communicating.” It is essential to communicate with all constituents. “You have to communicate with the students, you have to communicate with the employees, you have to communicate with the community, and you have to communicate with your immediate supervisor, the Board of Trustees.” He/she thought the communication was essential since many do not take the time to gather the information.

So maybe I would have cut back on some of the communication, but it really goes against the grain for me to want to do that. I believe as intelligent people we should be informed, and I also know from working with our immediate populous not everyone wants to take the time to be informed.

Instead of using the term mask mandate, Parker used the more positive term, “mask expected.” When “mask expected” protocols were not being followed, he/she tried to inform and persuade individuals to increase their mask usage.

We wanted to send out a reminder to be safe this long weekend and to remember to practice proper social distancing. The safety of our students, campus, employees, and the communities we serve is paramount to the institution. The wearing of masks and practicing proper social distancing has not been as strong as when we initially started the semester. We need to make a concentrated effort to make this a priority. Please make every effort to keep yourself and those around you safe.

Moreover, Parker commented about the similarities between the COVID-19 pandemic and AIDS, in particular the misinformation that occurred. “The other parallel, I’ve said about this numerous times, and I was a little too young to get into all of this, but the AIDS epidemic there was so much misinformation about AIDS.” Even though COVID-19 was classified as a

respiratory illness, Parker remarked, "...are you wiping down the doors, wiping down the tables after students have used them. All of these different things even though it was being classified as a respiratory illness. It was so much more dynamic than that." There are just so many unknowns about the virus. He/she stated, "We don't know you know. We just don't know." Additionally, in terms of how we respond to the pandemic Parker remarked, "We don't have long term empirical evidence to support your position, so I think that's going to be continuously challenged."

Culture

Parker valued the local community support. "It's such a different mentality here that people really do see value in what we do. They see the value that the college is trying to help." He/she understood the impact of community service. "You need to continue to do things that serve the community." Parker commented,

I will say it pays tremendous dividends that we do more community service work than any other organization. In fact, I would be emboldened to say you add up all the other organizations combined, and they still don't do as much community service as we do as an organization. But it's paramount that we do that. We are at the heart of what the community does. For us to have that level of support here makes it tremendously special...I think that has been a tremendous benefit in terms of what's really helped us get through this crisis.

Parker stated the community support helped him/her significantly during the crisis. Parker acknowledged the level of community support that he/she and the college received was very special.

So, when we dismissed we had several international students who couldn't go home. I had so many community members contact me and say...if somebody can't go they are

welcome to stay at my house. I'll give them meals; we'll do this which the college took care of that. But to receive the love and support from the community even though most of these people don't know our international students was overwhelming.

Financial Issues

According to Parker, another issue was just navigating the unknowns. Not knowing what the revenue streams would be was challenging and made it hard to forecast enrollment.

But when I look at our enrollment trends...Our enrollments have gone up. But, if I dissect the data and say...really look at this with me. You can see our face-to-face enrollment has continued to go down for the past seven years while our online enrollment has gone up exponentially every year. Should we be making heavy investments in brick and mortar, or should we be doing more on the online side because strategically those decisions help guide and navigate you. So, it creates some unique challenges.

Due to these concerns, the leadership have "delayed a lot of projects and some personnel hiring that would have been good for the college." Despite the numerous unknown factors, Parker referenced the importance of speaking with confidence. He/she has been criticized for stating he/she did not know something.

You're trying to make the best decision you can, and you always have to speak with confidence and conviction...We're just doing the best we can with the information we have. I've made that statement numerous times and I've been criticized numerous times for making that statement. Well, if you don't know, why you are doing this? We're trying to do the best we can.

Another unknown issue was related to government funding. Parker remarked, "Because I've bought probably \$100k in testing that probably if I had gone through those federal channels

and contacted our federal legislators directly, I could have probably got some of those things for free.” Parker was a member of the evaluation committee “for requesting those funds but then [when they] got around to distribution...nobody notified us. So missed opportunities are the biggest challenge or regret in this.” The other challenge was lack of guidance regarding how the funding that was received could be spent.

Well one of the other big challenges we faced is that you’re getting this big pot of money, go ahead and spend this and we’ll give you the guidance later. Okay, well we’re going to be held accountable for that.

Not having set guidelines regarding how the government money could be spent caused frustration. Although they vetted everything through external vendors prior to spending any money, determining whether something is an allowable expense is highly subjective. Parker commented,

So, you’re getting someone that is making decisions after the fact and evaluating whether it was an allowable expense. Was it an allowable expense that you bought antimicrobial furniture? Well, it was because it wasn’t socially distanced before. We have all the rationale, but everything is done in such a subjective manner. Just because I see something in one light you could say I don’t agree with that at all. But we tried vetting everything and then you’re dealing with external auditors, and...they don’t work [in higher education].

Governance

In terms of governance, Parker related, “we operate off a board of policy governance.” He/she continued, “the day to day operations are led by the president and the employees of the college. However, the Board of Trustees only has one employee and that is the president.

Everything else that happens falls under that individual's purview." Parker stated, "The biggest challenge for me personally, is just the level of accountability to everyone...I feel like I work for everybody."

We are absolutely accountable to everyone. I have to answer to every employee, I have to answer to every community member, I have to answer to every student, I have to answer to the board, I have to answer to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

When asked if the divisiveness we are experiencing in the United States is being driven by politics, Parker responded by saying, "I honestly don't believe it is. Some people like to complain...." Having worked in sales Parker referenced a rule called "10/80/10." Parker stated,

Ten percent of the people will love you no matter what. Eighty percent is really what you need to cater to because it will go one way or another. And 10 % of the people it's not going to be enough for them no matter what you do.

Parker discussed the challenges of vetting issues during the pandemic.

You are vetting something through so many different people and obviously there are very polarizing opinions on both sides of that. So, you're trying to go through and keep everyone happy in a no-win situation. People's beliefs differ from the guidance, they may differ from your own, and they may differ from each other...You're trying to be respectful to everyone even though opinions can be different. That's been really tasking and that's created probably the greatest challenge.

Parker's college is located in a heavily anti-masking community.

The unique situation that has really occurred for me during this is we are in a heavily anti-masking community, so much so that the Rotary has always been held on campus. When we implemented a mask mandate they stopped coming.

Other than the K-12 system that “waited until December to implement a mask mandate and then lifted it during Christmas break,” no other organization in the county instituted a mask mandate. Instead of referring to it as a mask mandate he/she called the policy “mask expected.” As a result,

one board member...[said] I don’t agree on your operational plan. I said that’s fine, what don’t you agree with? He/she said no other organization in...County is doing this. My simple rebuttal to that is I’m not responsible for those other organizations. My responsibility is to the students, to our employees, and to the community.

Parker also had to “deal with parents who [were] upset” with the mandate. They were asking “Why is my child in quarantine they should be out?” Parker responded,

I’ll never apologize for trying to keep your child safe and I hope as a parent you understand that...Everything we’re operating on is based on CDC...[state guidelines] or local county guidelines...So, we’re basing everything we’re doing, every decision is based on the best guidance we’ve received.

Regarding masking Parker stated, “Do I believe that [masking] is the most efficient way? It doesn’t really matter what my personal belief is because my professional position requires me to take a different stance.” Parker furthers, “but again...I’m not the expert...We depend upon professionals, there are people that are employed in that type of line of work.” Parker thought there had been political pressure.

So, there is absolutely a lot of external influence from that if you look at the federal side, the CDC, the local side of it. There is also a certain amount of political pressure when X institution does this why does Y institution not do that?

Parker disagreed with a vaccine mandate instituted by one community college.

There is one community college in the state of...that I firmly disagree with what they did. They stated that any employee that is going to travel they mandated a vaccine. They did a vaccine mandate which to me that is borderline unconstitutional. I don't believe that and please understand I'm not an anti-vaxxer. I've been fully vaccinated pretty much since I could get it...But I don't believe I have the authority to tell someone else they should do this.

Parker believes individuals "should make the most informed decision for themselves and make sure they are taking the proper safety precautions." There are "all those pressures because the universities and some of those obviously because of being research 1 institutions were getting Department of Defense funds or were being classified as federal contractors." Parker stated,

I've had so many people question is...Community College going to mandate a vaccine? No, now if they tie it to our Title IV funds and if you guys don't do this you aren't entitled to Title IV funds we can't serve students. Title IV is a critical part of our operation; we would implement it. But there would never be a case where we would voluntarily implement it.

In addition to federal there is also local influence.

But I think there is a lot of federal influence there and think there is a lot of local influence. I do get angry phone calls from people saying I don't agree with what you're doing. That's fine, I'm not asking you to agree. I'm not asking you to say this is what I believe we should do...It's just a matter of trying to be compliant and keep people safe even if it differs from my personal beliefs. That's just where we are.

There were a few "board members who [were] very anti-maskers." Parker related they "had a board member die of COVID-19." He/she continued,

I would think that would be some kind of a wake call for people that you're just trying to keep people safe, you're trying to do the right thing. Well still I had a couple of board members who were not going to support me if we moved to a mask mandate which is fine.

As a result, he/she believes you should "focus on the things you can control and make sure you're consistent. Consistent with everyone regardless of how you feel about them, and everyone will be treated exactly the same." Parker reiterated the importance of consistency. "I didn't say consistency earlier but that is something I also think is critical in terms of what we're all doing right now."

In addition to various mandates, sports posed unique challenges. Parker stated, "the main thing that concerns [him/her] in everything [he/she is] doing, [it is] probably sports." Although his/her college had established protocols he/she did not know what other institutions were doing. He/she wanted to do the right thing for his/her constituents. He/she commented, "I can tell you right now we just had a student test positive in one of our sports. We immediately suspended operations of that sport and the team went into quarantine." Parker commented, "I can also tell you last year when we played against a team that had a COVID-19 positive student that was puking on the sidelines during our game, and they still let that student play." Parker continued, "So, if you ask me, ethically should the college suspend all sports, yeah I could get behind that statement. However, from the engagement side, from trying to give students a normalized operational experience at college yeah." He/she discussed how colleges "went to these limited capacities for a brief period of time." Is it "essential that [a sporting event] is full, no. We could argue that all day long. Is it essential from a revenue perspective that [a sporting event] is full

yup, I can behind that.” He/she related how “some of these external factors are really influencing CDC guidance.”

The CDC guidance became so confusing.

If you’ve been infected in the past 90 days you’re considered vaccinated. What if you got the third booster, there are all these if and thens that come into this. When is the fourth booster going to be required? When is this going to come into play? You and I have been around each other within two feet of each other for more than 15 minutes, but you’re fully vaccinated but you could also be a breakthrough case.

There are so many unique scenarios. Parker remarked,

Everything is a different situation and has to be treated as such. So, I think that’s going to be the long-term challenge of it, is trying to unite people in a country that is so horribly divisive right now.

Summary

According to Parker, he/she utilized a servant leadership style. He/she demonstrated many competencies of this style such as focusing on serving the needs of others. During the pandemic he/she was concerned about his/her employees losing their jobs. There were limited job opportunities, and many individuals were tied to the land. He/she worked diligently to ensure all employees’ paychecks were kept whole during the pandemic.

Parker used a variety of communication mediums including radio, email, newsletters, videos, and the web to communicate to his/her constituents. In addition, for consistency he/she felt it was important to communicate at predictable intervals. Parker thought communication was essential since some do not take the time to gather information on their own. His/her

communications were infused with positivity. He/she frequently praised his/her faculty and staff for their hard work.

At one point the college had a mask mandate which posed challenges since the college operated in a strongly anti-masking community. Parker discussed the local and federal political influences regarding their masking policy. He/she also received many inquiries regarding if the college would institute a vaccine mandate. Sports presented a unique ethical dilemma for Parker. He/she had encountered schools who had allowed COVID-19 infected students to play at sporting events. In his/her opinion, sports were not required for an educational experience, and they could cause safety issues. On the other hand, they are an integral aspect of the student experience and could provide colleges with revenue.

The pandemic had its share of challenges. Many challenged him/her when he/she stated he/she did not have the answer. Some questioned him/her when he/she continued to pay his/her staff while working remotely. Moreover, in the beginning there were many misunderstandings regarding COVID-19. Even though it was classified as a respiratory illness, people were wiping down tables, etc. Not everything, however, was negative during the COVID-19 outbreak. Parker was overwhelmed with the community support he/she received. Many volunteered to house international students who could not go home. Moreover, despite the pandemic, he/she never lost his/her positive outlook.

Case 2: Ryan

Ryan demonstrated democratic leadership qualities while leading a small community college the past eight years. He/she thinks good communication skills, empathy, resiliency, positivity and data driven decision making were critical leadership competencies during a crisis.

Concerned his/her faculty and staff were not handling the stress as well as he/she had anticipated, he/she used team building activities to help improve morale.

Democratic Leadership Style

In terms of leadership style Ryan stated, “Well, it’s kind of hard to identify what [I] think versus what others think.” He/she pointed out that his/her “leadership style [was] really being present, trying to get into spaces, staying ahead of the problems before they come to me.”

Although not specifically stated, Ryan demonstrated qualities of democratic leadership.

In the spirit of democratic leadership, Ryan liked being actively involved. “...in a small college the best part is I get to have my hands in everything.” He/she utilized “a real face-to-face leadership model, being highly engaged both internally and externally.” He/she preferred this style because “That is how [I] build trust, engagement and give [my employees] the opportunity to talk to [me] before it becomes a problem.” Ryan commented, “I’m really visible on campus...” and do my “best work on my feet.”

In a newsletter Ryan stated, “The social component of [the college’s] work is critical, and our students need us more during these “stay at home times.” Ryan demonstrated democratic leadership when he/she discussed the social limitations caused by the pandemic. Ryan commented,

Being with each other, I think the pandemic has changed that. [Individuals] end up behind a screen and [they] don’t know what’s going on because [they’re] not having conversations with [their] neighbor and [they’re] missing a lot and that’s been difficult...

Like democratic leaders, Ryan was supportive. He/she remarked, “We try to watch out for each other, we’re small.” He/she was concerned “that the pandemic has had an adverse effect on the culture of this organization because what we do best is the one-on-one interaction.”

He/she continued, “We have...[a few hundred] employees and if you wanted to I could walk around and call them all by name.” In one of his/her newsletters he/she commented,

It has been a long six months since we all were on campus together and I have missed you. I will do my best to get around to welcome everyone personally throughout the week, but [I] look forward to seeing you...It promises to be a year like we have never experienced!

In true democratic leadership style, Ryan gathered input from others. He/she stated, “maybe more than anything don’t be afraid to ask for help when you don’t have the answer.” He/she believes in being forthright. He/she remarked, “we’re pretty transparent here.” Regarding feedback, he/she stated, “My staff’s not really bashful about telling you if you messed something up. We just didn’t get that feedback that the leadership side had any chinks.”

Competencies Important for Leaders

According to Ryan, good communication skills, empathy, resiliency, positivity and data driven decision making were essential leadership competencies. When asked what the most important leadership competencies were, Ryan responded, “So, I think empathy, a positive outlook, good communication skills...” He/she believes good communication skills were “the biggest challenge of leading.” Ryan thought empathy was the most important leadership competency. He/she said, “I think empathy has to be at the top of that list.” In addition to empathy, positivity was a critical aspect of leadership. He/she commented, we decided “to talk less about...[COVID-19] just because I think focusing on it again leads to that collective trauma that we’re still working with.” Ryan discussed resiliency in terms of his/her faculty and staff. Ryan discussed how he/she had “[over]estimated how resilient the faculty and staff were as they had to deal with the mental health impact at home and at work.” After “seeing that collective

trauma impact” he/she “would have brought more face-to-face mental health opportunities on campus.” Finally, using data to make decisions was essential. Ryan commented, stated, “using data to drive your decisions amongst all of the political issues I think were the most helpful for me.”

Good Communication Skills

When asked which leadership competencies he/she used most often, he/she mentioned the import of listening. Regarding leadership challenges, he/she stated, “really its consistent messaging, communication, and getting the communication message to everyone. I think that continues to be the biggest challenge.” He/she furthered, “For all decisions it’s three pieces of advice communicate, communicate, communicate. You can’t overcommunicate what’s going on and why.”

Empathy

Ryan showed empathy when he/she recognized different viewpoints. “I think empathy is just understanding that people are coming from all those walks of life we described...Really trying to be understanding of that diverse mindset related to that.” He/she displayed empathy regarding employee health concerns. He/she stated, “We still have one faculty member who has a real immune system problem who has been online 100% since the pandemic. I’ve only seen her on campus once or twice in the summer she was just picking up stuff...” Additionally, Ryan recognized the emotional aspects of the pandemic. There has been the tragedy of “losing faculty, losing students and those are the kind of emotions that I think really have evolved during this pandemic.” There were other concerns as well. “There is that fear, that uncertainty...” He/she asked, “What can we do to make...life easier..?” Recognizing the challenges, Ryan brought in a

motivational speaker “to give people different ways to think about” the pandemic and to help “people understand why they feel the way they feel.”

Positivity

Ryan acknowledged the power of positivity. He/she wanted “to have a more positive outlook and to just keep moving forward.” He/she recognized “It’s a traumatic time and [I] want to agree to a point but at some point [I think we] have to step forward and live.” Ryan used positivity in his/her communications. “Remember, [the college leaders, faculty, and staff] are here for you. We will do it - together.” Ryan continued,

I want to share some positive news related to two new scholarships that have been funded over the last few weeks...They were simply doing what they do best...touching the lives of students. It did not go unnoticed. We all have the ability to make that difference and you just never know the positive impact you may have in the life of a student.

In several communications he/she praised the efforts of his/her staff. “I would like to again thank everyone for their work over the last six weeks to support our students.” In another example he/she remarked, “Finish strong! We will get through this and back to a more normal world in time.”

Resiliency

Most of the presidents did not specifically mention resiliency as an important leadership competency, however; this competency was discussed by four out of the five presidents. Ryan’s discussion regarding resiliency was related to the impact on the campus community. Regarding resiliency, Ryan commented,

I probably would have brought more face-to-face mental health opportunities on campus for people. We have an online option for people they can use as part of our insurance

program. We encouraged them to do that. But now seeing that collective trauma impact, post first year, that would be something I would do differently. I thought about the student piece of this. We've had some resources down in housing prior to the pandemic. I talked about putting a nurse in there and we started to see people going to the nurse for those mental health needs. It just kind of became part of what they did. We were able to direct them in our community. I may have [over]estimated how resilient the faculty and staff were as they had to deal with the mental health impact at home and at work. I think I did [over]estimate it. You still continue to deal with that impact.

Data Driven Decision Making

Ryan discussed the import of using data. He/she stated it was imperative to use the “data to drive your decisions.” Regarding the pandemic Ryan stated, “We used our own positivity count to guide us.” In addition to communication skills and empathy, Ryan commented, “using data to drive your decisions amongst all of the political issues I think were the most helpful for me.”

Initial Administrative Behaviors at the Beginning of Pandemic

In March 2020 Ryan went on vacation. Ryan said, “I had been burning the candle pretty hard, so I decided to” go on vacation. He/she “knew that by the time...[he/she] got home the world was going to be different.” Recognizing he/she was “not a medical professional” he/she worked with experts for assistance. He/she relied “on the experts that are out there...the local, state and federal health officials” and followed their lead. The main concern was to “maintain the health and safety of everyone there” and to continue “serving [the] community on campus.”

Shifted to Remote Learning

Ryan “put together a leadership team that would be...[the] sounding board during the pandemic.” The college “delayed the start of the second semester [spring 2020] by a week.” They brought the faculty back and “tried to drop as many resources onto them as possible as they moved online.” As part of the emergency response plan, individuals were required to wear “cloth face coverings when in public spaces and when not being able to maintain the recommended social distancing.” There were “a certain number of essential workers like [Ryan’s] staff who never went home.” A COVID-19 specific section was created on the college website.

we created a site right away, so people knew what the campus was like...you can see we’re pretty transparent here it’s a pretty small community. What can we do here to appease the minds of the people who are here?...We were really upfront.

Due to having students living on campus, they “immediately went to a local health provider to get a nurse and placed a nurse in the dorms three days a week to help...manage the case count and the follow up with students and families...” He/she furthered,

The goal is to provide students/staff access to a health care professional and for the nurse to assist us in managing active COVID-19 cases. The costs will be paid for through our federal COVID-19 grant dollars and/or our Operational Equipment and Protection Insurance.

They “took a floor in [the] dormitories and made it a quarantine floor so [they] could move students out and kind of manage those.” Students were brought “back on campus to complete their lab requirements.”

Return to Face-to-Face Learning

The college used a phased approach to resuming face-to-face classes in fall 2020. “President Council Members” were the first to return to campus. Beginning “August 29 [2020]...Students return[ed] to campus.” In preparation, the college purchased “a lot of tests” so they “could test students on campus...at no cost to the student” by using federal funding. Ryan said, “we did a lot of facilities work, extra cleaning, hand sanitizer, like everybody else.” They also “arranged...classrooms to allow for the proper social distancing.” Investments were made to improve “the filtering of air and most importantly” they set the “systems to maximize the amount of outdoor air coming into...[the] buildings. This minimized the recycling of air in the building and provide[d]...a safer environment for all.” Using Cares Act money, they purchased some Clorox cleaning machines to facilitate the cleaning process.

You can roll this thing in, turn it on and ten minutes later you can pull it out and the room was clean. We put one of those in our athletic facility where all the uniforms and the laundry and everything was used. When the baseball team gets done with practice we could roll that thing in, turn it on, and all the bats and things would be cleaned up.

Employees were asked to “be thoughtful about...[their] travel plans and exposure risks.” Most “fall [2020] competitions and national tournaments...[were] moved to spring 2021.”

Communication

Ryan thought communication was important. “For all decisions it’s three pieces of advice communicate, communicate, communicate.” Regarding communication he/she said it is important to communicate the why. Ryan stated, “Why are we doing this, why are we changing?” In terms of communication the biggest challenge is, “consistent messaging, communication, and getting the communication message to everyone.”

The emergency response team “started daily meetings...[and] then backed those off to once a week and then as needed.” Ryan sent “a [news]letter every Friday.” The weekly newsletters included employee shared photos and stories. “Personal Celebrations – I thought I would add a new section to the [newsletter]...inviting people to share a photo of a personal milestone or celebration with the...[college] community.” The newsletter also included motivational quotes. “You, the educator, must take the lead if we are to see impossible dreams become reality.”

Ryan recognized his/her employees in his/her newsletters. In one communication he/she stated, “Please take good care of you [faculty, staff and administration]. You [faculty, staff and administration] matter.” Also, he/she commented,

Thank you [faculty, staff and administration] for all of your work in preparation for the students next week. I appreciate all of the planning and preparation everyone [faculty, staff and administration] has had to do to prepare for the known and unknown.

In another newsletter Ryan remarked,

I am so very thankful that I have the opportunity to work with all of you [faculty, staff and administration]. It has been a challenging nine months for all of us, but I am so glad to be going through this time with you.

Praising employees in a newsletter Ryan stated, “All of our faculty and staff have been working hard to provide [students] with the services [the students] need as we move forward in this new environment.” For the employees he/she wrote “Thank you [faculty, staff and administration] for all of the support and assistance you [faculty, staff and administration] have provided our students this week.” In another newsletter Ryan remarked,

I want to thank everyone [faculty, staff and administration] for the extraordinary effort it has taken to serve our students this fall [2020]. There is still a lot of work to do, but student success does not happen without every member of the...TEAM focusing on quality and service...I appreciate the additional support you [faculty, staff and administration] have provided this fall [2020].

Ryan commented in a communication,

I cannot thank [our faculty, staff and administration] enough for [their] remarkable response to the COVID-19 crisis. It is in the darkest times when stars shine the brightest, and in this most challenging time in...[our] history, our faculty, staff, and administration have risen to the occasion. From the bottom of my heart, I can't thank you enough for your hard work and support over the past two weeks. A special thanks to our technology team for their response to the need to move online in such a short period of time. Your support has been simply remarkable.

Thanking his/her employees in a communication he/she stated, "Thank you to everyone for going the extra mile for our students as we deal with the emerging challenges related to providing a quality higher education experience during a pandemic." Employee efforts were acknowledged in a newsletter.

...I want to thank everyone [faculty, staff and employees] for the hard work and dedication to our students throughout this unique and challenging year. I recognize the extra effort it has taken to engage and serve our students in the hybrid environment, and I am very proud of the contributions of the entire...team!

Ryan recognized the challenges for the employees.

I know that it is causing additional stress for everyone, and I encourage you [faculty, staff and administration] to take good care of yourselves [faculty, staff and administration]...I want you [faculty, staff and administration] to know that I recognize the challenges and the extra effort that is being put forth to meet the needs of our students. THANK YOU!!!

He/she showed concern for his/her employees. In communications he/she commented, “I hope you [faculty, staff and administration] are healthy” and “take good care of yourselves [faculty, staff and administration] in the days, weeks, and months ahead.” Further, to encourage masking, the college created an email image to remind their staff to wear their masks. Ryan remarked, “It’s one more way to show our students and the community that we support the measures we have put in place to keep our college healthy and open.”

Culture

Ryan commented, “In my role I’ve been a school administrator since I was 29. I started way too young, so I’ve had adversity in my daily life for the better part of my career.” Ryan related, “The pandemic was different but not so different than any other issue or problem that I’ve been dealing with on a regular basis. I’m losing sleep on a regular basis it’s just a matter of what it is.” He/she discovered that for “people who teach and...control their own environment this really was difficult.” Adjunct instructors are “used to saying this is the way the world works” however they are now faced with situations where “[the adjunct’s] spouse has COVID-19, [the adjunct is] in quarantine, [or the adjunct’s] XYZ passed away.” Ryan “underestimated the impact of not being together” and its impact “on culture and climate a little bit.” The resulting “stress hasn’t been handled as well as I would have anticipated.”

As a result, Ryan “tried to engage [his/her team] in a little bit different way than...[they have]...historically done.” They did a “Halloween costume contest” and “at Christmas...[they]

did a festival.” They also held their “Holiday Reception via Zoom...[in] December...2020.” Employees were encouraged to participate in the “Holiday video.” The 2020 video theme was “sharing holiday cheer” by “showing off some dance moves.”

Ryan admitted he/she was a “little bit of an old stiff” and he/she “was shocked at the number of people who jumped on...[these activities] just to have a little fun.” He/she recognized it is “just a short reprieve from the fatigue that we’re all feeling.” Ryan and his/her team have included different team building events to help lift morale. They held a virtual spring grilling event to “celebrate the most unique academic year-end in the history of the College.” Additionally, they created “a fun compilation video for...students filled with uplifting messages from faculty and staff members.” They wanted to “show them how proud...[they] are of them for finishing this crazy semester and how excited...[they] are to see them again in the fall!”

Regularly scheduled meetings with the faculty and staff allowed “employees to interact with [the president] in a rather informal basis.” This offered employees the chance to “ask me anything and just leave that opportunity to communicate from both sides.” Ryan stated it was helpful because “there are items we have not considered and questions/concerns that we have not addressed adequately.” Moreover, Ryan said employees should be given “...access to leadership...” so they can “ask those tough questions.” Regarding meetings Ryan preferred “to do them in person. People can see me and know when I’m joking and when I’m not.”

Financial Issues

In terms of finances, there were concerns due to a three year decline in enrollment “of almost 20%” which was partly “due to demographics” and partly “due to the pandemic.” Ryan remarked, “We’re still trying to figure that out. How do we re-engage people? It just kind of froze our students.” There was a larger number of students who applied but “didn’t show up in

the Fall of 2021...” Although many thought the community colleges “were going to be the big winners but nationwide that wasn’t the case.” Ryan continued,

You have demographics, you have COVID-19, and you have a job market where you can work at a Quick Shop for \$17 an hour. [As the leader] you have a lot of variables working against you. This is the first time in my time in higher education where the enrollment numbers didn’t follow the unemployment trends. It went the opposite way during the pandemic. That’s been one of the tightest correlations I’ve ever studied. At the college in 2008, 2009, 2010 those were the great years for enrollment and that’s because unemployment rates were 9-10%.

In terms of financial issues, another variable was regarding what was acceptable uses of the different funds such as the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF II) and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds. Ryan, utilized auditors to ensure the funds were used appropriately.

It would be interesting to see if they ever audit those funds and how much inappropriate spending happened. We’ve just been really careful with that and again maybe that’s my conservative nature...So really anything gray we run that by our auditor because we think the feds aren’t going to audit all of this but, if the local auditor would flag it in any way it could be catastrophic. If we have any gray areas we just call our auditor and [ask the auditor how should we] interpret this ARP language [and ask,] is this a legal expenditure?

Mental Health

Ryan discussed the pandemic stress in his/her communication. He/she commented, “Dealing with the universal impact of COVID-19 is stressful to say the least.” and it is bringing “new unprecedented challenges to maintaining physical and mental health.” Being a small

institution, everyone tries to “watch out for each other, we’re small.” Employees already had free access to five mental health sessions “with a local credentialed professional.” Additionally, some new mental health resources were established. Ryan commented about the pandemic challenges. “Unfortunately, we have had tragedy in our leadership...losing faculty, losing students and those are the kind of emotions that I think really have evolved during this pandemic. There is that fear, that uncertainty...” The isolation is hard. Ryan stated,

Everything depends on how much support your staff has. Some of our staff are widows or widowers. Some are going home to an empty house and trying not to go to a grocery store. All of the isolation becomes fatigue in itself.

The length of the pandemic was difficult.

I’ve been through things but the length of this is probably what has challenged all of us the most. How do you stay focused on keeping people safe, moving people forward.

Those are different. The length of this is different than any other health issue or trauma that I’ve ever had to deal with. It just kind of pokes at you. You kind of get on a roll and then all of a sudden you have five people out of the business office...I think I told you this the last time we’ve lost more family members [during the pandemic than]...in the 8 years I’ve been here.

Ryan furthered, “I’ve never had anything that’s been so disruptive and persist over this length of time...Honestly there’s been nothing quite like it if I reflect. It’s been going on two years now...” It was difficult to establish a rhythm.

It is just difficult to get a sense of normalcy because just when things start to get normal someone in the family gets exposed or has COVID-19, there are daycare issues, etc. At what point will COVID-19 really become like the flu?

Recognizing the fatigue, Ryan utilized team building events in 2020 such as a “Halloween costume contest,” “Christmas...festival,” “Holiday video” and a “virtual Grill [event].” In his/her newsletter Ryan commented, “I want to wish everyone a relaxing spring break. Please take some time for yourself and decompress prior to the final eight-week push.”

Ryan was concerned about the long term impacts. “When you start talking about us working from home and the isolation and some of those things I’m not sure that’s going to help us socially over the long haul.” The strain of the pandemic “shows itself...when people can’t control their emotions in a public setting.” Ryan related how his/her family vacation made him feel “like...[he/she had] been let out of jail.”

Ryan “had adversity in...[his/her] daily life for the better part of...[his/her] career” so, although the “pandemic was different” it was “not so different than any other issue or problem that...[he/she’s] been dealing with on a regular basis.” However, he/she realized that for “people who teach and can control their own environment this was really difficult” because “they’re not driving the train anymore.” Ryan stated, “that stress hasn’t been handled as well as...I...anticipated...I underestimated the impact of not being together and on culture and climate a little bit.” Reflecting Ryan commented, “I probably would have brought more face-to-face mental health opportunities on campus for people...The isolation definitely has a mental impact and to all of us to some degree.”

Governance

Ryan discussed the pandemic. “It’s unprecedented times, it’s crazy on a lot of levels.” He/she remarked,

So, we were probably the first ones in town to make any significant decisions about how we were going to operate...My board has been fantastic. At the March board meeting I

came armed with our plan and had them formally give me permission to make the decisions I needed to make to run the college.

The college “lock stepped with...[the] local county public health, and we didn’t do anything without their support. It was hard to criticize it because that was what was coming out of the best scientific evidence we had at the time.” Ryan commented, “cohesion is critical.” It is important to have “a cohesive leadership team both at the college level and at the board level to lead through these times because dissension is going to divide everyone.” Ryan stated, “given that authority we would have made decisions...[for] fall [2021] to have required a mask mandate. The sense was that you run the risk of legislative repercussions if you go beyond the mandate.” There was legislation at the K-12 level specifically prohibiting mask mandates. Although colleges

weren’t explicitly named in that legislation but some of the leadership made it clear that was the intent. So, it impacted the way we operated from that point on, and you just had to decide if you wanted to take the governor and the legislature on by going beyond what their intent was.

Regarding masking Ryan stated,

in pockets we’ve masked people...When we brought the...shows back in and the performers they had some expectations that the crowds would wear masks, or the workers would wear masks or a combination thereof...As a result, a mask mandate was created for the...shows.

As a result, there were “a few patrons who said we’re not going to come. If they didn’t want to comply” they could receive a refund.

In addition to masking, Ryan discussed the range of viewpoints. “In this case you have someone who is literally scared to leave their home to somebody who thinks this is all garbage and [I am] trying to manage between those two markers, and you just can’t win.” Referencing politics, Ryan stated, “put the political environment on top of it where it’s just okay to be mean and blame everybody else. It’s just different, it’s a different world I think.” Ryan remarked, “it seems okay to say things that don’t have any research behind them and are hurtful.” He/she discussed the polarization.

How do you continue to be friends, work together and those kinds of things. I’ve seen that polarization. I’ve even seen that in my circle. I’ve got some friends that just can’t deal with the strong right perspective and they’ve kind of pulled away...In our lives in education, you’ve got to kind of spend your time in the middle managing both of those, right, regardless of how you feel. People need to be able to do that.

Talking about perspectives he/she commented, “How to deal with other perspectives and grant people grace when they’re not like yours. It’s a problem that we’re going to have to deal with.”

Summary

Despite not specifically stating his/her leadership style, Ryan demonstrated democratic leadership qualities. He/she was actively involved in all aspects of the college. He/she encouraged both his/her external and internal constituents to be actively involved in decision making. He/she felt high levels of engagement were important for building trust. By having a trusting environment, he/she thought his/her employees would be more inclined to talk to him/her before situations grew into problems. Additionally, he/she favored the one-on-one interaction because he/she felt the college worked best in that environment.

Ryan considered communication crucial. It was important to have consistent messaging and ensure everyone received the message. To help overcome the pandemic isolation he/she added a new section to his/her weekly newsletter where individuals could add information regarding personal events. The newsletter included employee shared photos and stories. In many newsletters Ryan praised his/her faculty and staff for their efforts.

Ryan discussed the polarization surrounding the pandemic. For a while, the college had a mask mandate in place. Ryan would have required a mask mandate in fall 2021, however he/she was concerned the college could face governmental repercussions. As a result, the college only required masking in limited situations. Ryan thought college enrollment would increase as unemployment increased, but unfortunately that was not the case. Unlike past years, the enrollment numbers did not follow unemployment trends. Another financial issue the college faced was understanding the appropriate uses of different government funds such as the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF II) and the American Rescue Plan (ARP). Like others, the college used an auditor to help them assess proper uses of the funds.

Ryan mentioned the mental health challenges associated with the pandemic. There was so much fear, uncertainty and isolation. He/she thought one of the biggest challenges of the pandemic was due to its length. Recognizing the fatigue in his/her employees he/she created different team building events to give them a fun break from the pandemic. Looking back, he/she wished he/she would have established more face-to-face mental health opportunities.

Case 3: Frankie

Frankie utilized a democratic leadership style and was starting his/her ninth year at a small rural community college. For Frankie, the crucial leadership competencies in a crisis were good communication skills, confidence, calm demeanor, resiliency, trust and admitting your

mistakes. Although filling vacancies had always been challenging, due to the pandemic they were not even getting applicants for open positions. The inability to fill open positions, combined with workers being out sick due to COVID-19, had caused hardships for his/her college which had small department sizes.

Democratic Leadership Style

Regarding his/her leadership style he/she stated, “I try to be open; I try to be...someone who listens, and values input from across the institution.” He/she demonstrated democratic leadership qualities by requesting input from his/her team. “What do we need to do?” Frankie “learned to value the people on the ground floor, to listen, to value that type of feedback...I want their feedback; I need their feedback.” Frankie commented,

Obtaining instructor feedback was important...we’re following all the recommendations but I’m not in the classroom. I need to hear what classroom teachers are worried about and what they need to have a successful face-to-face return to campus in the fall of 2020.

He/she also wanted feedback concerning operational plans. “I’m going to listen to our people and get their feedback on plans.” He/she sought guidance. “There’s not one person here in this pandemic who is the expert on everything.” He/she was completely aware that “[just because] I’ve been doing this for...years it doesn’t mean I know everything.” Listening to others is important. “Don’t forget to listen to your people.”

Like democratic leaders Frankie was supportive and tried ‘to make [the college]...a safe space...’ He/she encouraged diverging opinions. “I don’t want yes people; I’m looking for people that disagree with me and provide new ideas.” He/she was not risk adverse. Reflecting on his/her style he/she stated, “I’d like to think that we listen, and we’re open to trying new things

and taking calculated risks. That's just an example of what we did prior to the pandemic. We'll continue to do those things during the pandemic."

Competencies Important for Leaders

Frankie said good communication skills, confidence, calm demeanor, resiliency, trust and admitting your mistakes were essential leadership competencies. Good communication skills were essential. When asked what leadership skill he/she used most often Frankie replied, "Communicate, communicate, communicate..." Furthermore, leaders must have confidence. He/she stated, "Confidence is also important, believing in your message. You need to believe in your strategy which you ultimately convey in your message." It is also essential that leaders remain calm. Frankie stated, "You can't panic, you need to remain calm." Additionally, Frankie mentioned resiliency in terms of his/her faculty and staff. He/she was "surprised" by "the resiliency of [faculty and staff]" and how they dealt with the shift to remote operations. Moreover, trust is a critical leadership competency. He/she commented, "It's not blind but they have faith." Finally, leaders must "own it if you made the mistake."

Good Communication Skills

Frankie stressed the importance of good communication skills. Frankie stated, "So, we're continuing to communicate, communicate, communicate. It stinks because the message keeps changing and because the situation keeps changing. I know people are tired of it and people want black and white and I get it, but it's not."

Confidence

In addition to communication, confidence was a critical leadership competency. Frankie said, "Confidence is also important, believing in your message." He/she continued, "You need to believe in your strategy which you ultimately convey in your message."

Calm Demeanor

It was important to remain calm. Frankie commented, “You can’t panic, you need to remain calm. You’ve got to be credible. Part of that links together, if you’re panicking you’re going to lose credibility when you’re rapidly spouting orders or whatever it is.”

Trust

Trust was essential an essential leadership competency. Frankie stated you should, “rely on experts to guide you...Hopefully you’ve built some trust along the way so that when you do speak people already have that trust with you...They may disagree but that’s okay. They’ll understand why we’re doing something.”

Resiliency

Like many of the other presidents, Frankie did not mention resiliency as an important leadership competency. He/she did, however; discuss the resiliency of his/her faculty, staff and students. Frankie was surprised by “the resiliency of people.” Even though faculty were given only an extra week to shift to remote learning, he/she commented,

To get the majority of the students across the finish line in that second 8 weeks of the spring semester of 2020 was what it was about. The ability for our faculty and the support staff to help stand all that up in terms of the technology side. The pedagogical training that went on in a very quick environment and ongoing throughout the semester was amazing.

He/she continued, “But I’ve been so impressed with the flexibility, the adaptability, the resiliency of our people, and I’m very much appreciative of it.”

Admit Your Mistakes

Realizing “There’s not one person here in this pandemic who is the expert on everything”, Frankie realized mistakes would be made. Frankie felt individuals should “own it if [they] made the mistake.” By owning the mistake, “you’ll have more credibility going forward.” You can tell your stakeholders, “this is the guidance that we had that was wrong, we’re moving over here now...Explain why and here’s what we’re going to do now.” Moreover, this guidance applies not only “in a pandemic” but also in “a normal situation.”

Initial Administrative Behaviors at the Beginning of the Pandemic

Frankie commented, “I have to give credit to my youngest [child]” for “saying dad you have to pay attention to this thing called COVID-19 and that was in December 2019.” Frankie related, “hearing this thing going on the East Coast and they’re reacting and of course here in the Midwest we tend to be behind both coasts on a lot of things. Things tend to get to us a lot later.” Frankie joked, “We’re not the population center. I like to tell people at...Community College we’ve been socially distancing since...So, we’re already practicing one of the key tenants.” He/she related, “We were talking on campus and not really knowing what to expect...I never took a class regarding how to deal with a pandemic.” Things started really ramping up in March 2020. This happened during “the last week of classes leading into spring break.” Frankie was:

scheduled for...an annual event...[to] celebrate all state scholars across the state...Typically, we have legislators attend this. It’s a huge luncheon where 400-500 people attend at a big banquet room not far from the capital. Parents of the recipients are there, legislators are sitting at our table, and typically we have 2-3 tables at that event.

Frankie stated, “I went up Wednesday night in preparation for the whole meeting. I started hearing on Wednesday night that the board...which governs the...state universities, was shutting down.” He/she said,

What do they know that we don’t? I’m getting this news and I’m calling all my people back at...Community College. I’m calling all of my board members saying heads up just so you know this is moving and it’s moving fast.

During the banquet he/she asked the student and parents “...what do you think we should do? Their answers were I think its media hype. I think it’s overblown.” During a meeting “with all...[the] community colleges in the state,” the colleges “made a commitment as a system that [they] were going to stand strong as a system and keep our doors open.” While driving back Frankie was “listening to [the] governor on a news conference.” He/she stated, “By the time I made it back I had changed my mind; we’re shutting this thing down.” Frankie commented,

I was just inundated with information that was foreign. No one had really gone through this. You’ll hear this phrase, and you’ve probably heard it a thousand times, we’re building this plane while we we’re flying it. That’s what I feel COVID-19 was like across the world because nobody’s gone through this before.

Frankie said, “I contacted our leadership team and scheduled an emergency meeting. He/she “couldn’t believe in [his/her] own mind, in that...hour drive that [he/she] flipped 180 degrees and went against what the group had just committed to.” He/she,

immediately reached out and said folks I’m sorry I’m deviating from what we decided. Here’s my factors, here’s what we’re doing and why. Then soon everybody followed suit. I wasn’t the leader; I don’t mean to say it like that. It wasn’t long before everyone said we have to do something similar. It was an interesting time to say the least.

He/she said,

I didn't want to be that way, typically we're shared governance and I want to get everyone's input, but it was time for action not listening for feedback... Why, because we have to get the word out because we have students leaving. They have to know; they have to pack their stuff. It was a longer spring break than they anticipated.

Shifted to Remote Learning

In a communication Frankie stated the decision was made to “extend Spring Break (regularly scheduled for March 16-20) through March 30, 2020, so that...faculty and staff [had the] opportunity to prepare for transition to an online format.” Discussing the faculty response Frankie said the “faculty here, like many places, did not want to fail their students in terms of fail the opportunity to continue their education. So, they responded, although not everybody. But the vast majority did wonderfully.” The faculty “took a face-to-face class and [shifted to online] in a short period of time with limited resources because all of a sudden everybody...[needed] our tech support, not only for the infrastructure but the educational side.” Frankie commented, “We did the best we could to provide the resources and the flexibility. People responded incredibly well. I'm very grateful for that.”

Frankie followed “the CDC guidance, the...Department of Health...guidance and local guidance. At one point [they] had a mask mandate that the county instituted and the state and the governor.” In the beginning “Tests weren't readily available. Obviously, the vaccine wasn't available.” They sent “checks back to students for unused room and board for the second half of the spring [2020] semester...which became lost revenue.”

They created a “Return to Campus Task Force which was a mixed group of faculty and staff.” Although the “cabinet was following the media, [and were] following all the

recommendations” Frankie wanted “to hear what classroom teachers...[were] worried about and what they needed to have a successful face-to-face return to campus in the fall of 2020.”

Regarding the return Frankie discussed,

How could we do it and how could we do it safely? Because the thing that has been driving us from the get-go is the safety of our campus constituency and our community. We’re imbedded in our community. We have students that are local, from across the state, from across the region, and we have international students. So, we just can’t factor in our campus we have to factor in the community.

Frankie was concerned the college could “have a negative impact and ripple throughout [the] community.” The task force “put together some good recommendations...” Frankie commented, “We were just trying to keep us safe because that’s what we do.” He/she related,

Any outbreaks that occurred in town were not the result of any campus events. That’s been a blessing in that regard. I don’t wish that on anybody, but we weren’t the source or the cause and that was a big concern.

Although, “not everyone agreed with their operational plan, they understood the college’s focus was on safety.” Frankie stated, “People don’t always agree 100% but they understand our intent is to help keep them, our students, and our community as safe as we possibly can. As a result, here’s what we’re going to do.”

The college was “buying all the sprayers, the sanitizers, the plexiglass, and the PPE (personal protective equipment)” which made Frankie “very nervous” because these purchases were “all on the institution’s dime.” Finally, the college started “getting some [government] dollars coming [their] way.” Frankie “had more budget conversations with [his/her] board than [he/she’s] had under normal circumstances.” Frankie also communicated with “the American

Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) as well as governmental and health entities.” Frankie furthered,

The national organizations that oversee us that give their recommendations have got such a broad audience. We’re a small rural community college and they’re also doing larger urban community colleges...which is just the opposite. The recommendations they make are different. They just are. I think it’s nice and comforting that the state did this, the county did this. We can all follow this but then it was discovered that I was impacted differently than others.

He/she stated, “We were then empowered to make our decisions much more at the local level.”

Frankie furthered, It was important to keep the “leadership team, the board very much informed with what [the] challenges were and then on top of that the state was anticipating a 10% cut.”

Frankie commented, “Oh my, we’re looking at what are we going to have to do here to keep our doors open? Are we looking at budget cuts, reallocation of dollars, etc....to have to do that?”

Fortunately, “The closer we got to August 2020 and opening our doors the students started coming back.” Students were concerned. Frankie discussed,

There was a lot of student concern, I can’t blame them. What’s it going to look like? If it’s going to look like when I left I don’t want to go. I get that. Can I play ball? Can I be in the choir? Can I be in the performing arts? Can I be on the rodeo team? Will you let me participate?

Return to Face-to-Face Learning

Using a phased approach, they did “a soft opening of the campus on July 6, 2020.” Face-to-face courses resumed August 19, 2020. Regarding enrollment and funding concerns Frankie commented, “By the time it was all said and done we were 1% down in enrollment and the 10%

cut from the state never materialized...Through all the different relief funds we were made whole financially. Who would have thought?" The government funding was critical for the college. "We've been able to endure the worst of it because we had the resources." In addition to "Keeping [the] leadership team, the board very much informed with what [the] challenges were," Frankie remarked, "if we'd had known in the beginning we would not have worried. But you didn't know that until the dollars came."

Communication

Frankie stressed the significance of communication. Frankie explained "...communication is vital and is a big part of what we do." During the pandemic Frankie's "leadership team shifted to...Teams." They also conducted meetings "via Zoom...even though you're down the hall." They "talked about what we had learned in the past 24 hours that was different than the previous 24 hours. We discussed developing remote capabilities and having to ramp those up."

Frankie communicated the college's "COVID situation" in "weekly email[s]." Regarding communication Frankie said,

I just don't send out emails, I get on a Zoom call and do a big college wide meeting.

Here's what we're doing do and why and have a question and answer session. Here's the work that the task force has done and I'm sending the information to you all and that type of thing.

Frankie also kept the "leadership team, the board very much informed." He/she commented,

"Even today things are changing rapidly." He/she discussed when

The CDC suddenly...[reduced] the quarantine time period from 10 days down to 5. What they didn't catch there is that's [for] the general population. They didn't really follow up

there...regarding institutions of higher education. It would say except for institutions of higher education and long term care.

Frankie commented,

However, you see it in the media, and you think it's five days...in terms of isolation days, quarantine days, and that type of thing. So, we're continuing to communicate, communicate, communicate. It stinks because the message keeps changing and because the situation keeps changing.

In addition to communicating with the leadership team and staff, it was important to have "constant communication with our state legislators, communications from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC), and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)." Regarding COVID-19 communication Frankie stated, "I know people are tired of it and people want black and white and I get it, but it's not." He/she commented, "But we're going to deal with it and be open, honest and communicate to you." Looking back on the pandemic, he/she stated he/she would "have prepare[d] people for a longer haul...If you know it's going to be a long siege you approach things differently. Your strategies would be different. The message you're conveying would be different." Frankie recognized employees in his/her communications.

Our faculty have done a tremendous job of juggling that, being in person one day, on screen the next. It's just a total change for them and they've come through it with flying colors, so much appreciation to them...Hats off to our faculty, our staff and our students for the way they've reacted. They've taken this on. They just have, and we've been successful to date, and tomorrow's a new day.

Frankie used to “report [the] community status because the local health department was publishing data three times per week.” However, the local health department “become overwhelmed...[so] now they don’t have accurate numbers.” Instead, Frankie called “the chief executive officer of a local hospital and asked, what’s your situation like and do you have beds?” He/she stated, “That’s been interesting because they say they have beds they just don’t have staff so technically we don’t have beds.” This community information is important because “Our people intermingle...so you’re blending your community with your campus so that’s why they’ve had the strategy and the message to promote the health of both which has been consistent from the beginning.”

Frankie discussed how his/her previous experience during 9/11 helped him/her through the pandemic. Communication was a critical component of the solution. He/she related, “Every crisis is different. The solutions are developed differently but they constantly communicate regarding what resources are necessary.” In this situation “the solution was developed at the local level” but “critical communications occurred with both the administration and the board to ensure not only college wide support but the appropriate resource allocation.” Frankie stated, “your teams have to step forward with their ideas, their solutions, the resources that are available. When in doubt it is best to overcommunicate.”

Culture

The pandemic has caused challenges because, “We’re not very deep...It’s a one person this, a one person that, this is the only teacher we have in this program, etc.” They had to modify “hours of certain offices to make certain they...[were] covered.” Frankie commented,

We have three people in financial aid. Well, if two of them are out it's not like you can go down there and help them. I mean it's specialized fields so you just have to say hey guys we can't serve you today. We'll get right back to you and here's what's going on.

In addition to worker shortages caused by illness, the college has experienced difficulty filling vacant positions. Frankie commented, "One of our challenges as a result of COVID-19, but we've always kind of had, but it's been amped up, is staffing." The college has "had twice as many openings as we've typically had in the 8 plus years" Frankie has been there. Although the college "always had challenges being small and rural," Frankie said "now there are times when we're not getting anybody to apply for certain positions. That's just wow." Now the college "is not getting applicants let alone people to come work."

Frankie and his/her "leadership team [have] been meeting on a regular basis to figure out ways" to address the issue. Frankie commented, "compensation plays a role in this, no question." Frankie said,

If we decide to give everybody a raise of X amount then where are those monies coming from? The state is not going to raise it, I can't raise my tuition prices, and I'm not getting any more from my county, so I've got to create it internally.

Frankie is having "to adjust salaries on the go because it's now. By raising pay for incoming people that also affects existing people." As a result, this is "creating some inequities and we don't want to do that." Frankie related,

But the broader context of the conversation is that while we're conversing about compensation, and this is true about every organization I've been in, your culture gets brought up...Not everybody keeps a job due to pay, not everybody leaves a job because

of their pay... We want to be fair and equitable in that process and reward our employees but at the same time we want to provide a good culture.

Frankie “formed a Campus Culture Committee” which is “a mixed group of faculty and staff. We’ve given them this semester to do some work and come up with and get feedback from their areas.” Frankie said, “If you’ve done any research you’ll hear the term culture eats data every day. That’s important to us.” Frankie is “anxious to hear what they have to say.” He/she “know[s] that communication will be an issue. As many times that you communicate using different venues or ways it’s never enough. I get that.”

Although COVID-19 has presented challenges, it also presented opportunities. As a result of COVID-19, Frankie discovered “we’re not as good as we’d hoped we’d be in certain areas.” Although the college is “driven by a face-to-face environment primarily,” it is “Not that we don’t want online because we do but it’s pointed out some challenges, some weaknesses there that were exposed during the situation.” Frankie stated, “So, we’ve got an opportunity now to repair that and to ramp us up and to make us better in that regard.” Frankie continued,

Our people primarily want to be on campus and have that traditional college experience and do those things, but I can’t speak for the younger students coming up who are more used to doing some of these uses of technology and that.

Frankie stated,

Maybe that will shift [the] mission in terms of doing more things remotely and be much more accepted by our faculty. I think it has changed the industry because there is much more acceptance across higher education. You have to be, whether you like it or not or it’s your first choice, it’s part of the culture now and kind of accepted.

In addition to remote learning, Frankie also discussed snow days. He/she said, “One of the things is do we really need to have snow days?” Frankie said, “If we knew at least a day or two in advance you could tell your faculty make sure you bring home your laptops and that you’re available to teach.”

Financial Issues

Frankie stated he/she “had more budget conversations with [the] board than [he/she’s] had under normal circumstances.” Frankie relayed how “...some of the factors...[used] in building [the] budget” including “enrollment projections,” the “mill levy” and “assessed evaluation[s]” were unknown. Frankie stated the college

has three forms of revenue typically. There is some miniscule stuff with grants and that type of thing. But it’s local tax dollars, state dollars and tuition revenue. Those are our three main factors when we figure out a budget as we work through things.

The college spent “a large amount of time working on the budget for the next school year.”

When Frankie pulled up the

enrollment comparisons...There were times when [they] were 40% behind...[They] started to close the gap and get it to only 30% behind. But whoa, are we going to have a college? Are we going to be here? What’s it going to look like?

In addition, “the state was anticipating a 10% cut.” Frankie stated “Oh my...what are we going to have to do here to keep our doors open. Are we looking at budget cuts, reallocation of dollars, etc...to have to do that?” Fortunately, “The closer [they] got to August 2020 and opening [their] doors the students started coming back.” At the end of the day the college was “1% down in enrollment and the 10% cut from the state never materialized.” Moreover, “Through all the

different relief funds we were made whole financially.” Due to government dollars the college has “been able to endure the worst of it because [they] had the resources.”

This college is “actually incentivizing students...students were incentivized to get vaccinated using the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) funds.” Frankie continued, “If you get vaccinated and you live in the dorms I’ll give you a \$500 incentive. I thought I’d rather pay you to get vaccinated to keep us as safe as we could.” Frankie discussed the advantages of the incentive. “I pay for less testing if there are more people vaccinated. It has helped us. It’s not perfect...I think that’s helped us in the long run in terms of this academic year.”

Mental Health

In addition to government funding, Frankie discussed managing the recurring nature of the virus. “It’s become cyclical this roller coaster ride...” He/she discussed the ongoing “ebb and flow” of the virus.

There is the uncertainty of everything...The waves keep coming. There might be gaps between the large waves where you calm down where people can swim in the sea and wham here it comes again and now it’s only surfing weather.

Frankie commented about the longevity of the pandemic. “The challenge is its ongoing right?...Most people thought this would probably be done in a year or whatever and by this time next year.” Frankie stated, “I’m struggling with COVID-19 and we’re in 2022. I realize [they] labeled [it] COVID 19 in the year that it came but wow that’s going on three years.” Due to the virus’ persistence and “the uncertainty, the fatigue” our “faculty are tired, [our] students are tired.” It is hard because “you don’t know what to believe.” Frankie reflected, “we’re tired of COVID-19 but COVID-19’s not tired of us.” Frankie discussed college snow days,

When we're making decisions on these snow days that we've had these last couple of days, you know we don't have two feet of snow. We've got five to six inches...It was reminded to me that in a communication with both of our local superintendents, and they have staffing issues related to COVID-19, so they're right on the cusp of cancelling anyway because they don't have enough staff. With the mental health side of things everyone could probably use this, and February is a long month as we all know even though it is only 28 days. It's usually cold, it's darker, it's wintery out and all that. That did factor into our conversations and some of our ultimate decisions.

Knowing what he/she knows now, Frankie stated he/she would have, "preach[ed] patience as opposed to we, can get through this together which is still part of the message but a little less urgent."

Governance

During the pandemic "I think it just really pushed that you have to listen, you have to be aware, you have to understand what the data is telling...[you]." Frankie received input "all over from both the federal side and the state side." Additionally, "You're hearing from the local side, and you're concerned about your own campus and the flow from your students, faculty and staff." You take this information and "You mush it all together to see your options and ultimately you take your course of action."

Frankie referred to this process as the "shake and bake model." Frankie discussed, "Remember that Shake 'n Bake chicken? You put it all in the bag and you shook it up and out came this beautiful product. Beautiful might be too strong but it was functional." Regarding shared governance he/she stated, "We're still trying to do as much as we can in that shared governance model" but sometimes in a crisis situation "time doesn't allow that to happen."

His/her goal was to make “the best decisions for [his/her] organization and for [his/her] little corner of the world.”

In fall 2021 the college had a mask requirement. Frankie discussed,

At one point we had a mask mandate that the county instituted and the state and the governor. I’ve had the healthiest year I’ve had in a long time last year when it was required all of the time from anything colds, flus, etc.

In terms of masking Frankie commented, “you’re entitled to your opinion but I’m going to side with the benefits of having the mask.” Frankie discussed how the mandates “were easier to follow when they were directives. Folks we’ve got to do this, this is coming from the governor, the county, wherever...” Even though the mandates were gone Frankie commented, “We still have to make those decisions...But things have obviously softened over time as the politics have become involved.” Frankie continued, “The health and safety side I think has been diminished due to the politics side and the economics side. That’s a whole other thing.” Frankie stated,

We communicate [the policies] to our community at large and there’s politics here. We just handle it that way, in a positive way. I go to the local grocery store, and I might be the only one with a mask on.

Regarding COVID-19, “We’ve had to adjust and learn to work with this situation because we all know we’re far better when our doors are open, when we’re open for business.” Frankie continued,

Last year [2021] we weren’t allowed to go to the state house unless we were testifying. This year [2022] we’re encouraged to go the state house even with the pandemic rising again...I’ll be there because that’s how important that is.

He/she stated,

...it's really amazing to me to see the shift nationally, locally, certainly across the state...with the rise of cases right now. If this was a year ago, we wouldn't be playing basketball, we wouldn't be having school. Yet we're playing basketball and we're having school.

Frankie was "proud of the fact that [that the college has] been able to keep dancing. We just keep going...I've been proud of the way we've been able to keep our doors open and survive and persevere and continue with life."

Frankie discussed shared governance. He/she stated, "shared governance takes time and I think we're able to do that under certain circumstances more readily" but he/she was not able to use the shared governance model "as often as [he/she] would like." It is tough to use shared governance in situations that are "more crisis oriented where time doesn't allow that to happen." Not using the shared governance model was "one of the casualties of operating during a crisis." However, "It still has to go on the shared governance piece." Shared governance "provide[d] them an opportunity to give us the feedback of the things that were important to them." Frankie discussed,

To me it's vital in any organization not just higher education but certainly in higher education. It's part of the fabric and the culture of what we do. It's expected and quite frankly it's what works in my mind. Everybody shows much more investment when they're heard, and they've got an opportunity to be part of the process.

Reflecting Frankie commented, "there's a whole lot of clouded interesting things that occurred."

Summary

Although not specifically stated, Frankie exhibited democratic leadership qualities. He/she valued feedback and guidance from his/her employees. He/she recognized the importance of listening to his/her employees and provided a safe working environment. He/she encouraged dissenting opinions and was willing to take risks. He/she stressed the import of communicating especially with the continually changing information during the pandemic.

Since they are a small community college, they were greatly impacted by employee illness during the pandemic. These small departments were not only impacted due to illness but also unfilled job vacancies. The college was experiencing issues filling positions due to a lack of job applicants. Frankie thought pay may be part of the issue, but also thought there were cultural issues that needed to be addressed. Frankie felt communication was critical and regularly communicated using different communication methods. Frankie, however, was still concerned there were some communication problems that might have contributed to the college's cultural problems.

In terms of finances, Frankie was very concerned for the college's future. At one point their enrollment numbers were running 40% behind the previous year, and they faced a 10% cut in state financing. Fortunately, by the time the semester started, the state cut never occurred and enrollment was down only 1%.

Frankie discussed the mental health impact of COVID-19. It was extremely difficult to handle because in addition to its longevity, it came in waves. This resulted in elevated levels of fatigue for employees and students. So, Frankie started using snow days as mental health days to give employees and students a much needed break.

Case 4: Emerson

Emerson began his/her presidency just before the COVID-19 pandemic. He/she demonstrated competencies of a coaching leadership style. Focusing on his/her employees' mental health, he/she provided creative ways to provide employees a mental health break. He/she thought the key leadership competencies during a crisis were collaboration, humor, trust, resiliency, good communication skills and advocating for professional development at all levels. Unlike his/her peers, Emerson had an extensive background in crisis management.

Coaching Leadership Style

Regarding leadership he/she said, "My leadership journey has always been one of learning and it's the process not the destination." He/she displayed competencies of a coaching leadership style. Like coaching leaders, he/she assessed his/her employee's abilities. "I really tried to identify the strengths in my people..." Emerson stated, "For me I'm very much a situational leader. I look at people's readiness and their skills, knowledge, abilities and experiences to assess the readiness of what kind of style I'm going to use." Similar to coaching leaders he/she used a questioning versus a telling approach. Emerson asked, "What do you need from me at this time? Do I need to be the one giving the message? Do you need me? Do you need my opinion? Where do you need my opinion in the process?" Coaching leaders entrust their staff to make decisions. Emerson commented, "I empowered people really to take the lead and it was wonderful." He/she said, "I really took a step back and made sure that my people in the positions that they were in were empowered to make those decisions and support it." He/she displayed coaching leadership when he/she encouraged staff to "practice using Zoom, FaceTime, and...[didn't] expect perfection..." Emerson also demonstrated coaching leadership when he/she ensured his/her team used "good conflict resolution practices and build that trust to help us make

better decisions about what we're going to do and how we're going to move forward." Similar to coaching leaders, he/she thought he/she "shouldn't be in the minutia" so he/she empowered his/her employees. Emerson stated,

Faculty have been given the autonomy to move classes online if they or many of their students are ill. There is no reason to have so many rules. The faculty have the ability to temporarily change the class format and even to require masking in the classroom.

Emerson demonstrated a coaching leadership style by the importance she placed on developing employees' potential.

The president gets some contingency money to spend as they want. All of my contingency dollars have been focused on the development of my team and for them to develop their teams. Because you never know when the next crisis is coming, and you've got to understand who your people are... We're a small community so that capacity to be a high performing team is critical.

During a YouTube video Emerson demonstrated his/her coaching leadership when he/she stated, "...we need your creative minds... Shout out to the faculty who are engaging our students and delivering our courses in many innovative ways..." Like coaching leaders, he/she helped employees understand the connection between their actions and their goals. He/she commented,

We are making a difference in...[our area.] We are helping to flatten the curve by the decisions that we have made. I want to give a shout out to...[those] who've been taking the time to study the data and share that information through the media to make sure people understand we can make a difference by the decisions we are making to stay inside, to limit our interactions with others, practice social distancing, and...[do] very good hand washing.

He/she stated,

make sure we're assessing our mental bandwidth...We appreciate all of you that have been sharing your stories and sending...[us] pictures and little, short videos as well as Tik Toks so we can keep the spirits up as we work through this difficult and challenging time.

Emerson recognized community colleges had different challenges compared to their four year counterparts. He/she discussed, "For a lot of four-year institutions, they could just go online. Their labs might have been impacted, but for community colleges and 50% of our students taking career and technical education we could not do that." However, when they "started talking about...fall [2020]...[they] had to prioritize those students...There might be virtual ways to teach Diesel Technology, but they will not replace a student with their hands in the middle of the engine." That was not true of all career and technical education. Medical and nursing "can do things with mannequins and simulators but it's always in a small group. They can't do it in a large group setting." Emerson said, "We had to listen to our faculty. We had to listen to our student experience. We had to listen to the different parts of the institution to understand how to approach it."

Competencies Important for Leaders

The leadership competencies that Emerson thought were important were collaboration, humor, trust, resiliency, good communication skills, and advocating for professional development at all levels. Emerson said collaboration was essential and wanted to ensure everyone was sharing their thoughts and ideas effectively. He/she stated, "I think that collaboration was critical." Due to the highly unusual circumstances, he/she thought humor was an important leadership competency. Emerson commented, "I think right now, and probably this sounds snarky, right now we're having a sense of humor." Moreover, Emerson felt trust was "a

critical foundational factor” especially when working through a crisis. Although he/she did not discuss resiliency in terms of a leadership competency, he/she did discuss it in terms of his/her faculty, staff, students and community. Despite the tragedy, he/she “saw an increase in resiliency” which he/she attributed to the “spirit” of his/her state. Leaders must have good communication skills. He/she created his/her communications based on his/her intended audience. The communication medium and message was tailored to meet the needs of that audience. Finally, Emerson was a proponent of professional development for his/her team. Having a high performing team was critically important.

Collaboration

Emerson believes “collaboration was critical.” Instead of using the phrase shared governance he/she was “trying to move to a phrase of collaborative governance.” He/she stated, “I think it makes more sense in the community college world.” Emerson wanted to ensure “people are sharing their thoughts and opinions” because “a huge challenge of teams is when you don’t speak out...However how do I make sure that people are sharing their thoughts and opinions and building trust was so critical.” Although, Emerson commented, “The decision is really going to stop with me.” Collaboration provided “the recognition that we’re all in it together...” which “you don’t always get that in a crisis, so often you’re alone...I think that gave me solace.” Often leaders do not reach out to others and instead “you put yourself in a little island.” Emerson commented,

I think once again in this crisis the people that have moved through and are still healthy did that because they were utilizing their resources in a way that allowed them to stay lifted up, recognized they were not alone, and used multiple people to bounce their ideas off of and to get multiple ideas.

Humor

In addition to collaboration, humor was also important. He/she commented, “try to find humor in the chaos.” He/she continued, “This is insane right now... You’re going to lose a student for five days; you’re going to lose almost every student you have for five days. You’re going to be out for five days. We’re going to get through it.”

Trust

Another important leadership competency was trust. He/she related, “If you don’t have trust among your key team you’re not going to be able to work through any crisis.” It is essential to know that people “are there for you whether someone on your team has to be the emergency manager or if the emergency happened to them.”

Good Communication Skills

Communication was also vitally important. Emerson said, it is “really, really important to have...regular communication.” He/she noticed they had greater engagement using Zoom.

He/she stated,

when the president has an open forum you might get a third of your employees. So, when we would do things on Zoom we would probably have 65-70% of our employees engaged no matter what the topic was... We think it was because it was on Zoom. So, we’ve assessed different things to do that way. So, Zoom was really important.

Regarding communications Emerson commented, “You really had to balance and understand your audience and what the content of your message was...” They “used multiple forms of communication and depending upon the message [they] would decide what format that would be in...” Emerson furthered,

For the larger announcements we stuck to video. For something that was straightforward, to the point and there was timeliness to it, we would do that in a college wide email. If it was just a general update we would use our newsletter and then we'd have some college wide events that were more one-sided, so people would ask questions on chat...Regarding the students we used Canvas a lot versus using an email.

The college newsletter was published monthly but “was not very professional” so they “pivoted to a weekly newsletter.” It is essential to understand strategic communication, “such as when should the president communicate versus someone else.”

His/her communications were positive. In one communication he/she stated, "Tough times never last but tough people do. Take care of yourself and your family. I hope to see you soon." Talking to graduates and employees she showed appreciation. “You have demonstrated grace under pressure and have overcome many obstacles during this time of COVID-19. We are all so proud of you!” During a YouTube video Emerson said,

You've heard it over and over again. 2020 has been an unprecedented year one that will be long remembered. While that is true, I want to acknowledge the words I will use to remember to recall this year when I think of the faculty and staff at...Community College. Dedicated. Impressive. Creative. Flexible. Full of grace. Giving grace and Simply Amazing.

In another communication he/she said, “It is impossible to reach this goal without your dedication and commitment. I am so appreciative of all your work and patience.” Again, communicating he/she stated, “We are in this together. We are proud of our college, our students, our resiliency.” Emerson in a communication commented, “our employees are our number one resource...I'm so proud to be part of the...family.” In a commencement speech

he/she stated, “I may be biased, but I believe we have the best faculty to teach and give us the tools to be successful in the future.” In a fall communication, Emerson said, “Although our lives are definitely not business as usual, our students and our region need us...They need to experience our resilient spirit, our love of teaching and learning...”

Resiliency

Although Emerson did not mention resiliency as a leadership competency, he/she did discuss the usefulness of this competency during the pandemic. Regarding resiliency Emerson said,

I saw an increase in resiliency...The human spirit, so many people died. It was terrible. No matter what you believe about the pandemic, the vaccines, the masking, whatever the passion that people felt demonstrated a resiliency especially in the state of...that I did not see with some of my colleagues in other states. No way. People just shriveled up in their homes and hid. People did not socialize or were out and about like you'd expect. They were more closed off. But when you're a farmer, you're alone in your field. That's the spirit of...

Emerson continued,

So, that resiliency was so strong. I'm telling you on our team, with adjunct faculty we have almost seven hundred employees. Most of them are still here...People were exhausted, so it was important as leaders to give grace and encourage people to take days off...I think we found ways to make certain that people had a little bit of space and grace. So, I disagree when people say there was a lack of resiliency.

Advocating for Professional Development at All Levels

Even though Emerson did not mention advocating for professional development at all levels as an important leadership competency, it was something he/she deemed extremely critical. He/she stated,

The president gets some contingency money to spend as they want. All of my contingency dollars have been focused on the development of my team and for them to develop their teams. Because you never know when the next crisis is coming, and you've got to understand who your people are. You need to have that working relationship where you know that they are there for you whether someone on your team has to be the emergency manager or if the emergency happened to them. We're a small community so that capacity to be a high performing team is critical.

Initial Administrative Behaviors at the Beginning of the Pandemic

Shifted to Remote Learning

At the beginning of the pandemic Emerson stated, "so the fortunate thing for us was we were on spring break 2020. It was the week right before St. Patrick's Day." Emerson commented,

By using protocols established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and recommendations by the...[local] Health Department...Community College will move all credit classes to an online format beginning Monday, March 23, and continue in this format through the end of the spring 2020 term...

This "gave us the space to figure out what to do next. Our faculty were out of the office at that point." He/she continued, "We went along with everyone else and decided to move our classes online because the uncertainty was at such a level." The week was spent "build[ing] capacity to

move to online learning.” In a YouTube video Emerson stated, “...there is no playbook for what is happening in our world and on our college campuses, we are accessing resources from our higher education partners and relying on guidance from the CDC and...[the local] Health Department...” Emerson commented, “...safety has been our most important priority.” When he/she talked to employees in a YouTube video, he/she stated, “more casual attire is acceptable and in fact expected both for on campus and remote workers.”

No one “knew how long it would last” so they brought “students back in smaller groups to do skills testing so they would be able to graduate.” However, they “didn’t realize...almost all of...[their] students in the career and technical education programs, that didn’t have an exam requirement to get certified,” would be “immediately hired. They just started in the workforce. So, to ensure students could finish their degree the faculty developed individual student plans.” Safety was important. “These are unprecedented times and I want to reinforce that the health and safety of the members of our college community is paramount.” In addition to focusing on safety, Emerson recognized the importance of institutional values. Emerson stated,

there was a lot of pride in who we were as an institution. We didn’t have good articulated values, but it was very clear to me what those values were. The authenticity was really an important piece of who we are as...Community College. So, we decided in April to decide the format of every class before students registered in...fall [2020].

They “decided to prioritize...[their] career and technical education students and their experiences above those students who were on a transfer track.” It was important to ensure those students “have the opportunity to have face-to-face learning.” The registration timeframe was pushed

to May instead of when we'd usually do it in March and April. When students signed up for courses they knew exactly the format it was going to be in for the fall if it was going to be in person or if it was going to be virtual.

Emerson felt the “values of authenticity and honesty were more important than the enrollment numbers.” Their “enrollment was down, very different from the other community colleges in the state.” He/she said, “that was because people didn’t want online learning.” People didn’t go there “for English and Psychology and Criminal Justice. They came to...[Community College] for Diesel Technology and Building Construction and Welding.” They “had a mask requirement for the whole year.” Rooms and classes were rescheduled, “so...[they] had less students in classrooms.”

Return to Face-to-Face Learning

Emerson stated, “As the pandemic progresses...[the college] must evaluate various ways to resume some of the services on our campuses to accommodate the needs of our students and constituents.” As a result, a “COVID-19 Recovery Team” was created. This “Recovery Team” had worked “on designing a three-phased plan...[which included] facility adjustments and guidelines, practices and procedures.” Emerson commented, “We understand we are going to have uncertainty in the months ahead and unfortunately, we don’t know how long that uncertainty will last. What we look like on June 21 [2020] may be very different than September 1 [2020].” He/she stated, “To reiterate, academic excellence and the safety and the health of our College community will be at the forefront of opening and in the management of facilities and the number of employees working on our campuses.” The college prepared “facilities for...[the] next normal.” They wanted “to ensure everyone...[felt] safe working in this new environment.” Emerson stated,

This preparation includes placing partitions in frontline areas, making sure there is enough soap and hand sanitizer in dispensers, and make certain social distancing measures are in place for reception areas, service counters, and in open office areas. Additional measures take into account the reduction of desks in classrooms and the re-organization of lab areas so we can determine the number of students who can learn in those spaces respecting social distancing in the context of the learning environment.

“In mid-June [2020]” the college brought back “a limited number of employees back to [the] campuses.” Rotating schedules were used for safety as well as childcare issues. Emerson discussed, “Instruction over the summer will mainly occur in a remote format, with some students on campus in hands-on classes with social distancing in place.” The college required “the wearing of facemasks or shields by faculty, staff, students, and visitors in all college buildings at all locations beginning Monday, August 3 [2020].” Due to a “generous commitment of time by many volunteers, a supply of facemasks...[were] made for every employee.” For fall [2020], Emerson commented, “most of our applied technology/hands-on courses will be scheduled on campus again...and most of our general education requirements will be in multiple remote formats.” Emerson said,

I also want to share that on Monday, August 10, [2020] we will open buildings that will hold face-to-face classes this fall. These buildings will have normal business hours as we proceed into fall. Disinfectants and appropriate informational signage are being made available to ensure safety protocols are met. We will be adjusting our maximum capacity for spaces from the current 10 individuals or 25% of capacity to a simple 50% of capacity.

Emerson commented,

The Recovery Team will develop a standards of operation document to provide guidance that will assist you in your area. This will be based on work that has been developed by the American College Health Association and other public health resources.

The “Recovery Team” continued “to seek guidance from state and area public health agencies...Training opportunities...[were] created to assist employees” as they moved forward with the operational plan.

Culture

In addition to challenges, the crisis afforded opportunities to change some of the culture. One example is how the college addressed teaching with interactive television. The pandemic provided

a chance to throw that in the garbage because there’s always an ingroup and an outgroup.

You might have one out of two hundred instructors who can do both at the same time meaning teach a group of students in the room with them and also teach on tv.

Emerson asked for the “data that those students who are on the tv screen achieve student learning the same way that those in the room do.” But “No one could ever prove to...[him/her] those were equal.” He/she preferred “Zoom. It’s easier to have every single human on a screen and all be at the same interaction with the faculty than it is to have the marginalized students.” The use of interactive television was eliminated, and people were “pissed.” He/she stated, “We had buildings throughout our service area using this. Those buildings are not just for interactive TV, I said let’s just use the buildings differently. We’re not trying to close campuses. We’re just caring about student learning.” Emerson continued,

The pandemic gave us opportunities to have conversations that we didn’t want to have. I took advantage of every one of those opportunities. It also allowed me to push the equity

agenda without ever saying equity agenda. The people who were disproportionately impacted in our region were poor, people of color, people with some kind of citizenship chaos in their life and people that are first generation college students. We needed to take care. We still needed to help those students navigate career and educational goals. Nobody could argue with me about who was impacted the most...So, I just took advantage of those realities and allowed us to move forward much quicker than a new president would ever get the chance to.

Mental Health

Emerson made mental health a priority. “People were exhausted, so it was important as leaders to give grace and encourage people to take days off.” He/she said,

we all needed to breathe. I saw an increase in resiliency...so many people died. It was terrible. No matter what you believe about the pandemic, the vaccines, the masking, whatever the passion that people felt demonstrated a resiliency especially in the state of...that I did not see with some of my colleagues in other states. That’s the spirit of...

People were informed that “a sick day includes your mental health not just your physical health.”

In a communication he/she stated, “Please remember to take some time for yourselves.” In a YouTube video he/she said, “Enjoy remote coffee breaks between our people at home and those who remain on campus, take walks, get fresh air...During [these] difficult times...Community College has generous leave policies...” He/she also encouraged doing “virtual lunch and coffee break opportunities” as a “wonderful way to stay in touch while...maintain[ing] social distancing in the workplace.” In addition, Emerson said,

It is important to take time for you and your family...read one of the books next to your nightstand, write a letter to a loved one or a mentor, play a game...also you must laugh.

Student Activities in the Marketing Department are working to put a smile on our faces. They've created social media posts to share the creative ways we are teaching students and some of the silly things we're encountering in this new reality...

Snow days were also used as a mental reprieve. He/she discussed,

We had so many snow days in the winter of 2020 and the spring of 2021. If it started to look bad we were like oh heck, we're closing. It was because let's just use it as a day to take a break.

Emerson continued, "we found ways to make certain that people had a little bit of space and grace." Communicating to employees, he/she said, "Please remember to take some time for yourselves. You have deserved this time off more than ever. I encourage you to set aside your work, take time to be with your family and celebrate what you are thankful for."

Governance

Being new to the position, Emerson commented

I spent a lot of time with our board chair asking the question what my decision is and what is your decision...Nothing that we did with COVID-19, and how we dealt with it on campus, was their decision. It was my decision as the president. They hired me to operate the college and on that they were very clear...Please answer the question why.

As well as discussing his/her new position, Emerson discussed the politics relating to the pandemic. "...[The governor] made his/her decisions based on the information...and [the state] excelled that year...He/she was a very strong leader he/she did weekly press conferences, sometimes daily updates." He/she continued, "From a governmental perspective [the governor] was there and communicating and giving hope. It was really powerful." He/she was "not shying

away from tough questions, not shying away from his/her role as the leader of our state.” In the beginning the college’s pandemic actions were not questioned. Emerson stated,

As time has progressed the politics around masking and vaxxing and all that has been very interesting. We’ve been forced to take more into account regarding the political nature of...[the area] and the state as a whole in making decisions today versus 2020 and even early 2021...The political ramifications of decision making in 2021 were clearly felt.

Emerson furthered,

...we are not mandating vaccines. I’m not going to stand up as a leader and not have an opinion on it. I even look to the governor. The governor and I don’t agree on a lot of things. But he/she stands up at every press conference and says get a vaccine and I’m going to do the same thing. It’s your choice but the science is telling us this is the safest way to avoid being hospitalized, being very sick, and dying.

He/she said, “We had a mask mandate for a period of time, and it was impossible to enforce. We did succumb to the region and the culture of the region as using it as a guide for some of our decisions.” He/she commented, “I’ve been very conscientious of the governor and his/her perspectives as we move into the second year. And yes it has impacted some of the decisions we have made.” He/she had “to look at all of those stakeholders” as they “move[d] forward with...[their] decisions.” He/she indicated his/her “biggest challenge has been the divisiveness regarding the diversity of views related to this work.” He/she discussed,

The passion that you get from a paramedic instructor and the passion you get from a wind energy instructor. God bless them both. How do you recognize and allow that passion to be heard and make a decision? I think that challenge has been honoring the input, the opinion, and the data. You’ve got to honor it all.

He/she continued, “You are going to have people furious over the decision, not just annoyed, furious. They’re going to quit their jobs; they’re going to look for other jobs and you’ve got to be okay with that.” At the same time Emerson was

not afraid to challenge their perspective with the data and with people that are much smarter than the two of us who don’t have medical backgrounds...I challenge it with the science, with the data that shows that flu was almost non-existent in 2020 and the winter of 2021 because everybody had a mask on. It was about you both had masks on so the ability to transfer disease was limited.

He/she recognized that people “don’t want the government telling...[them] what to do.”

Emerson tried “honoring those multiple perspectives.” He/she attempted “to make sure that voices are heard, the inclusion word, ensuring that those who have limited voices that we’re getting those voices out.” Emerson did not want to “disregard voices because that creates anger, marginalization and those impacts are just as bad. How do you let the voices be heard and recognize what to do next and use that as value?”

Although, his/her “number one priority” was “the success of...[their] students...” he/she did not “want to get in people’s crosshairs that could impact...[their] financial situation, the respect that...[they have] earned, the future focus on community colleges and their impact in the recovery.” Fortunately, Emerson commented, “the board never questioned what we were doing. They always wanted an explanation of why.” He/she said,

there is always an option for the safety of our students...We don’t even question the measles vaccines when five year olds go to school. Again, there are religions that don’t support it, wonderful...In higher education vaccine exceptions have been part of my whole career and they’ve always been based on religious beliefs or a medical condition.

Those are the only exceptions you get when you live in a residence hall. Now it's very different.

Summary

Unlike the other presidents, Emerson began his/her presidency just before the COVID-19 pandemic started. He/she did not specifically mention a leadership style, but he/she displayed coaching leadership competencies. He/she assessed the skills and abilities of his/her employees and adjusted his/her style accordingly. Whereas many leaders used a telling approach, he/she preferred a questioning approach. He/she empowered his/her staff to make decisions and take the lead. He/she wanted his/her team to use good conflict resolution skills to make better decisions and build trust within the team.

Although he/she communicated using several communication mediums, Emerson extensively used videos to communicate with students and employees. The format used was based on the audience and the message content. His/her communications were very positive. During his/her videos he/she would praise specific employees including their accomplishments.

He/she discussed how the politics around masking and vaxxing had progressed. Over time Emerson had to take the local culture into consideration which impacted their decision making. He/she did not want any decisions to impact the college's financial position or future. However, he/she was not afraid to challenge viewpoints using science. Although vaccines were not mandated, he/she felt it was imperative as a leader to provide his/her pro-vaccine opinion.

Mental health was a priority. Even though he/she thought people were resilient, he/she saw the fatigue. He/she told his/her employees that sick days included your mental as well as your physical health. Emerson would remind his/her employees to take care of themselves. He/she frequently provided different ideas such as virtual lunch and coffee breaks, taking walks

to get some fresh air, etc. The faculty shared the interesting ways they were instructing students remotely. Snow days were used to provide a needed reprieve.

Emerson also discussed how during the pandemic community colleges faced different challenges than their four-year counterparts. Although labs at four-year institutions were impacted, the consequences were more significant for community colleges. Approximately 50% of Emerson's students were enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. These classes could not be easily transitioned to a remote learning environment.

Case 5: Pat

Pat had been leading a small rural community college the past five years. He/she stated he/she had a democratic leadership style. He/she said the most important leadership competencies in a crisis were empathy, good communication skills, honesty and having a calm demeanor. Pat discussed some concerns from both his/her employees and students regarding the move to an online modality. He/she also mentioned the challenges of employees and students who thought the pandemic was a hoax.

Leadership

Pat self-identified as having a democratic leadership style. He/she commented, "When I arrived here at the college it was a collegial type of decision making college." He/she demonstrated democratic leadership by involving others in decision making. Pat stated, "So, a lot of difficult decisions were discussed in various committees made up of various faculty members, administration, various levels of staff, and maybe the community and student body." He/she wanted to utilize the "advantage of the gifts or understanding of...[the] employees..." He/she said,

I think it makes us a stronger institution by putting everybody's ideas together at a gathering or a meeting to try and discuss the ramifications from the various areas of the college. If we make this decision how is it going to affect us over here. How will it affect us in academic affairs?..We can then make the best decision possible within that particular context.

Gathering everyone together was not always possible. He/she discussed, "There were a few times when we needed to make a decision quickly. I might have been able to gather two or three people to help make that decision. That's how that happened." Discussing his/her leadership approach Pat stated, "I believe that's the best leadership style when you have the time and resources to use it, so it would be a situational leadership style."

Like democratic leaders, Pat was supportive. He/she tried "to create a safe working environment." Regarding mistakes Pat stated, "...we'll make mistakes. Don't worry about it..." He/she said,

I want our employees to take risks, to try something new with the various routines that they have. Quite frankly I don't care if they fail. What I want them to do is try, learn from the mistakes and try something new again. We create a culture where we are trying to move forward through our mistakes...

Competencies Important for Leaders

According to Pat, empathy, good communication skills, honesty and calm demeanor were critical leadership competencies. Pat thought empathy was a foundational competency that was necessary for success with students as well as faculty and staff. Additionally, it was imperative to have good communication skills. Pat regularly communicated with all his/her constituents. Although it could be challenging at times, it was important to be honest. Having a calm

demeanor is helpful, especially in a crisis. Staying calm can help prevent the situation from escalating.

Empathy

Pat stated, “to be as effective as possible in the classroom, with administration, with staff I believe a person needs to have love and compassion in one’s heart for others.” Pat continued, “That is the foundation from which everything else is built in my opinion...Try to show them love and compassion, support them for who they were rather than tolerate them for who we want them to be type of mentality.” In a YouTube video, Pat commented, “continue to support your students, you already know they come to us with challenges of their own.”

Additionally, relationships were important. Pat stated, “to have already developed a relationship with various groups is very helpful especially in terms of crisis.” Pat commented, “It’s too late to try to develop a relationship once the crisis has happened. We need to have that worked out prior to the crisis.” Pat discussed,

The way I was raised my folks taught me to observe how people act, react, not necessarily getting involved, just observe. I’ve done that my entire life and it helps me understand sometimes the moccasins they’re walking in. It helps me be a better communicator, a better listener, and more empathetic to the situation that they are in.

Good Communication Skills

Good communication skills were important. Pat commented,

We did the best we could to communicate. Communication was absolutely key. If we had to overcommunicate we’d overcommunicate. It was better to have too much information than not enough. We don’t want people filling in what they don’t understand about our

expectations as opposed to just being flooded with the same information or where it becomes redundant. We'd rather be redundant and fill in the gaps.

It was imperative "to communicate to the various internal and external constituencies" which included "communicating constantly with the board." Pat stated, "Our board of trustees approved many of the recommendations to maintain a safe working environment for our student and employees so a lot of the communications we had were channeled through and approved by the board..." He/she also had "to deal with accrediting agencies" for their programs such as "nursing, respiratory therapy, and radiology..." Pat commented, "We had a lot of communication with them." It was important to be out in the public. Pat stated,

A lot of the public institutions shut down. As president I'm also a member of our local rotary club to make those connections into the community. I'm also a member of one of the local churches so that's a different group of constituents where I try to make those connections to nurture that external support for our college which is very important to us. "Communicat[ing] with the various constituencies..." also included receiving updates from the local hospital. Pat said,

They have been flooded with COVID-19 cases. They've been encouraging us not to have group activities. We're also making decisions and having discussions with the local health officials. Our local health hospital administrators get together, and we participate in those. For example, when they don't have any space available it influences the direction of our decisions here as well. You don't want to have a heart attack or a car accident because there are no beds available here in the area.

Disseminating information, he/she "communicated in different ways." Pat discussed,

It's always preferable to communicate face-to-face in my opinion. It would be preferable, now when I say face-to-face I have to clarify that means without the mask. Because of COVID-19 we're wearing masks everywhere. Reading body language is important even though it may be subtle or something that I may not recognize easily. Body language is very important to go along with the words that I'm using, the narrative that I'm using.

Face-to-face communication was not always possible. Pat stated, "We all have our jobs to do, we have appointments and tasks, we need to do it now. I'm at a different location, so the next best thing to do is virtual communication." They used "Zoom a lot, more so as COVID-19 was creating more issues for us here on campus." They "got to a place where...[they] didn't even meet together in the same room even though...[they] had the ability to socially distance from one another. We thought it was safer to use Zoom meetings and be virtual." In addition to Zoom they would text one another if...[they] needed to get quicker responses from one or two people. It was probably in that priority that we used the different ways to communicate with one another. We did the best we could under the context provided.

Concerning communication timing Pat stated,

Initially it seemed like every time we turned around there would be new information coming out about Coronavirus-19...I would send out...a...group email with that information and guidelines. There were some days that we would send that out in the morning and in the afternoon there would be something new or we may hear something different.

In addition to timing, they "had to decipher the information that was true, and which was not true. So...[they] were trying to negotiate those challenges." After meeting "daily, for 7-10 days" they "didn't have any new updates for a while." When new information was received,

he/she said, "...what do we need to do to adjust to this new information to keep ourselves safe?" They "always tried to manage expectations of...[their] students and...[their] employees. We'd say this is the way it is now...these are the guidelines for now for the next two weeks." All emails "were always sent out by the president...even though the information included in them came from the conversation[s] of the emergency response team." In terms of the emails Pat said, "I would maybe make a few changes and send it out under the president's name for some credibility for the instructions and guidelines to everybody to encourage people to take this information seriously."

Different perspectives concerning the pandemic posed challenges. Some students and employees thought the pandemic was a "big ruse or joke or...fake news." Having one-on-one conversations were important. Pat stated,

Communicate with the various constituencies. Have the various conversations needed to clarify since there likely will be misunderstandings. Try to work out those misunderstandings. Somebody will likely be angry, frustrated. Get together with those folks and hear what they have to say.

Pat said,

listening first is very important...If they are angry by allowing them to vent they're able to eventually calm down after they've had their say and after their emotion has been spent. I try not to take that personally. They need that opportunity to vent. Try to better understand why they are in this situations, why they are feeling this emotion that they have...In my opinion...the best way to resolve an issue is through conversation.

By having a "conversation or dialogue" you can "try to come to a mutual understanding." Pat furthered,

Even though they may be upset about a particular decision if they understand the why they are more likely to go along and do what they need to do to satisfy the new policy or change. Also, by having this conversation, if it's with a group of people and we're trying to address some issue, oftentimes by allowing them through collegial means to make suggestions on how to resolve a particular issue they then have this buy in because they came up with this potential solution. They will then work harder to make sure that particular solution will work and provide less pushback in that direction.

Pat stated, "I should also clarify or define what I mean when I use the word dialogue since it's a little bit different definition." For Pat dialogue "is a genuine open-minded conversation, an exchange of ideas."

Honesty

Honesty was another crucial leadership competency. Pat stated, "as part of the leadership competency, as painful and as difficult as it might be to proclaim or discuss, we have to be honest and truthful about the current situation." He/she continued,

That sometimes can be very difficult. I believe our employees and students appreciate that and would prefer that rather than having something sugarcoated or have something misrepresented in order to try and maintain some lower level of anxiety. I think that we are strong enough that we can share some of that and help each other work that out.

Calm Demeanor

Pat stated leaders should "remain calm." He/she discussed, "By remaining calm I don't want to escalate any type of a crisis in terms of a perception." Pat used the analogy of when his/her daughters were young, and they would "trip and fall and land kind of hard." He/she said,

I knew that when one of my daughters would be looking to see how I'm responding to see how they're going to respond. So, I'd say get up, let's go, we've got more to do. More times than not, they wouldn't start crying, or at least they wouldn't have that response. I use that same logic here. I remain calm through these challenges. That is probably very important during times of crisis.

Initial Administrative Behaviors at the Beginning of the Pandemic

Shifted to Remote Learning

They "went into a crisis management type of mode...around spring break time..." when all their "face-to-face classes" were "suspended, beginning Monday, March 16 so faculty" could "re-design face-to-face courses to alternative teaching formats." Pat stated,

...we didn't have any guidelines to help us navigate or negotiate through or how to respond to a pandemic. We weren't prepared for that...We were going through making some radical changes that we hadn't experienced before. For example, all of our classes went virtual in one way or another. Of course, we have some faculty members who had never taught online or virtual.

He/she experienced

some push back because...[the faculty] did not want to change. But fortunately, they all understood this highly unusual circumstance and made those changes. Sometimes they were rather painful and required a lot of support, technical support and other folks to help them out.

Relationships were key during the pandemic. "Under a crisis situation we're really leaning hard on our relationships that we had hopefully previously developed to help us get through these times." Pat had to engage faculty who felt online courses were not "a very

effective way to deliver and assess content.” In the end Pat “was really pleased with their efforts to make that change.”

Due to pandemic concerns, they worked closely with different groups. There were some accrediting concerns because “Some of...[the accrediting agencies]were not very flexible and would not allow us to do virtual stuff...So how are we going to do that? We had a lot of communication with them.” They had “discussions with the local health officials.” He/she stated, “when they don’t have any space available it influences the direction of our decisions here as well...” Additionally, all of the “athletic and campus activities stopped. That was a big decision for us.” Pat stated,

Many of the decisions we were making at the time were based on our lack of understanding of Coronavirus or we were making decisions based on our best knowledge at the moment. We’ve have learned a lot since then...Even though we were given some guidance we still didn’t have that understanding of the way Coronavirus works. Although all the classes went virtual and most of the work that was done by employees was done remotely...there were a few tasks that had to be done on campus. So, we had a few employees...who would go into work when the deadlines were coming and would come here physically on campus. They may have been the only 4-5 individuals on campus at the time, so that they could complete those tasks or those projects and then they went home.

For the remainder of the spring 2020 semester, all courses remained in the alternative teaching formats. Faculty and staff had restricted hours for the spring 2020 semester. Fridays were designated as remote workdays. If instructors were on campus, it had to be between the hours of 8 am and 12 noon, Monday through Thursday.

Return to Face-to-Face Learning

Based on the operational plan created by the “Emergency Response Team (ERT),” the college re-opened in phases. The summer session began on May 18, 2020. During the summer session, students were allowed back on campus, but were limited to 10 people at a time. In addition, social distancing of 6’ was required. On August 17, 2020, the college returned to face-to-face courses.

In preparation for return to face-to-face courses in fall 2020, the college prepped the campus to “ensure the health and safety of members of the college community.” The college installed “hand sanitizer stations” and “Plexi-glass dividers in many areas of the campus” and enforced the “city’s mask requirement in all college buildings.” The college “did a lot of extra cleaning, cleaning doorknobs, spraying the fog around, [and] cleaning the desktops.” They also “put a cap on the number of students in the classrooms because they’re smaller classrooms.” Additionally, they moved “fall sports to the spring [2021] semester.”

Culture

The pandemic accelerated the shift to an online modality. Pat stated, “Definitely, as a matter of fact it forced people to move into that mode who...had never intended to do that.” Some instructors “didn’t believe [online] was a very effective way to deliver and assess content.”

Pat commented,

As a result, that could be the reason why we had one or two folks leave us because they were being forced into a work mode or a learning mode they didn’t want to do. Some students didn’t want to take courses using this format either...there [were some] students and some nontraditional students who were so uncomfortable they would end up

dropping classes. We did lose enrollment as a result of moving to a different delivery method, online.

Although community colleges are typically the ones helping address worker shortages, they faced similar concerns. Pat stated,

...we would have people resign or retire or whatever and we would have vacancies for positions. We continue to have the issue that no one will apply for the job. We have vacancies that are extended much longer than we normally have had.

Financial Issues

The college is facing financial issues. Pat stated, COVID-19 is exacerbating our issue with reduced enrollment. We continue to lose enrollment. As we lose enrollment we lose revenues. First of all, we lose the tuition and fee revenue we receive from the student. We also receive reduced state funding because it's based on credit hours. In addition, we receive reduced federal funding from Pell Grants because students are not taking classes or as many classes.

Mental Health

The other challenge was the unknown. Despite the guidance provided, “we still didn’t have that understanding of the way COVID-19 works.” Pat and his/her team did their best to “manage the mental anguish or the elevated sense of anxiety and stress” caused by the uncertainty. Pat stated, “It took its toll on us as well as our students and everyone involved including of course people in general and society as a whole. We are still being affected by it...” He/she said,

there’s a lot more conversation that needs to take place...Of course, we made a lot of mistakes that were based on ignorance. So, we just did the best we could with the context

provided. [We] tried to forgive ourselves for the mistakes we made and tried to ...continue to provide a safe learning and working environment...

Pat stated, “Under a crisis situation we’re really leaning hard on our relationships that we hopefully previously developed to help us get through these times.”

Governance

Prioritization was important. Pat stated, “...in a national emergency should we concerned with the likes of the individual versus the health and welfare of the many? So, we had those conversations. We’re having those conversations nationally as well.”

Shared governance can be difficult. “There are times that we have to make decisions quickly. That’s the challenge of shared governance.” Pat stated, if people could not meet they would “simply met with those who were available and...[made] the decision with those who were there. That was probably the greatest challenge.” He/she commented, “You want to be collegial, but it doesn’t always happen.”

There were some employees and students who thought this was a big ruse or joke or a fake news type of thing...What was happening out in public was reflected in our community college since the college is a small microcosm of the public...

Pat stated having “naysayers or the detractors...within our own ranks” was “challenging.” However, Pat was “surprised” by “the polarization about the national health emergency. It became a polarized narrative about the national health emergency versus individual rights” and “by the lies and the narrative that are developed about vaccines, masks or any kind of response to keep us safe.”

It was also interesting how state, county, and city mask mandates did not align. There was a “mask mandate in the state.” Pat discussed how different “counties...[made] decisions about how they were going to move.” He/she said,

Our particular county, which is...County, said we’re not going to follow the governor’s mask mandate. The county...was mask optional...Within the county...we are located within the community of...has a separate city commission. The leaders of the city commission said we’re going to enforce the mask mandate.

Pat said,

So, the governor said there was a mask mandate for the state...County said you don’t have to enforce it, masks are optional, but our city said you have to wear masks. That was kind of the challenge we were trying to negotiate here...It's just kind of how crazy it’s been at times. Those are some of the surprises we were trying to negotiate and work through.

The college followed the city mandate. Pat stated, “We were going to follow the city commission. Plus, that also gives us some protection. If somebody is unhappy with it we can just say we’re following the rules for the city.” In terms of masking, Pat commented,

We got to a place where we switched back to mask mandates knowing that we were mask optional previously and knowing that we would have a lot of push back for whatever reason. A lot of it was political. We’ve had to deal with that and continue to deal with that today.

There were challenges due to students and employees not wanting to wear a mask or get vaccinated. Pat stated,

So, to try and enforce some type of mask mandate we believe would have resulted in a loss in enrollment. Students would have simply chosen to go to another college that didn't have such requirements. We were concerned about that especially because we've been on a downward trend on enrollment here for a while. We really can't afford to lose much more enrollment.

Pat was also surprised by the “intentionally of trying to change the definition of what is truth.” Pat said, “I find that incredible, absolutely incredible. Of course, I grew up my whole life and was raised to tell the truth.” Pat continued, “

I of course understand that my perception of a particular truth may be different than somebody else's because they see it from a different perspective. I know that perspective is value laden, and values have a way of influencing our perceptions. I understand that too. But at least in my heart I'm trying to reflect or understand truth with a capital T as opposed to intentionally change what the truth is based upon what I want other people to believe from a political perspective.

The college used some Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) funding, to financially incentivize students and employees to get vaccinated. Pat commented,

If they showed us their card demonstrating they got vaccinated, their first two doses, the employees earned \$250, and students earned \$250 off their tuition...As a result of that probably 80% of our employees got vaccinated and probably 80-90% of our students got vaccinated too. We think that helps us.

Summary

Pat stated he/she was a democratic leader. He/she displayed democratic leadership competencies such as involving others in decision making. He/she thought it was advantageous

to utilize the ideas and skills of his/her constituents since it made the college stronger and improved the decision-making process. Pat liked utilizing shared governance, but it was difficult when decisions had to be made quickly. Sometimes decisions were made with the people who were available. He/she was a supportive leader who encouraged his/her employees to take risks. He/she was not concerned about failing, but rather learning from the mistakes.

Pat experienced some opposition when the college shifted to an online modality. There were some faculty who did not want to teach remote and left the institution. Some students also did not like this format. Enrollment dropped when they shifted to remote courses. Using Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEERF) funding, the college incentivized students and employees to get vaccinated. If employees received their first two doses of the vaccine they earned \$250. Similarly, students would receive \$250 off their tuition. Approximately 80% of employees and 80-90% of students were vaccinated due to the incentive.

Pat experienced political issues. There were employees and students who thought the pandemic was not real. He/she was surprised by the polarization surrounding COVID-19 and the discussion surrounding the national health emergency versus individual rights. Masking also posed concerns. The state, county, and city mask mandates did not align. The state and city had a mask mandate, but the county stated masks were optional

Cross-Case Comparisons

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic affected leadership styles and behaviors of Midwestern community college presidents. The cross case analysis addresses the research questions and describes president's understanding of how their leadership style and behaviors changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership Style

RQ1: How did community college presidents describe any changes to their leadership style and behaviors during this crisis? There were three leadership styles either mentioned or displayed by the presidents: democratic, coaching, and servant.

Democratic Leaders

Three presidents demonstrated competencies of democratic leadership. They encouraged elevated levels of employee engagement and collaboration. When decisions had to be made quickly, they gathered as much feedback as possible. Due to time constraints the presidents realized it was not always feasible to obtain everyone's feedback. These democratic leaders were concerned about the pandemic's impact on their organizational culture. They felt their teams operated best in one-on-one environments. In fact, one leader specifically mentioned the import of transparency and having a cohesive team. Cultivating safe, supportive environments, these leaders encouraged their employees to address issues using innovative approaches.

Coaching Leader

A coaching leadership style was used by one of the presidents. He/she used a strengths based approach exploiting the employee's skills, knowledge, abilities and experiences. Developing his/her team's skills was a top priority. He/she adjusted his/her leadership style based on his/her relationship with the individual as well as the individual's needs. Instead of a directing approach, he/she used a questioning approach to ensure he/she was meeting each person's needs. He/she focused on creating a supporting and trusting environment, so thoughts and opinions would be openly shared. Employees were empowered to make decisions, so he/she did not have to get involved in the minute details.

Servant Leader

One president stated he/she was a servant leader. He/she was intently focused on meeting the needs of others instead of his/her own self-interests. Decisions were made based on his/her moral views of right and wrong. Instead of emphasizing organizational success, he/she thought leaders should concentrate on doing what is right. His/her leadership vision highlighted service. Serving others included not only faculty, staff and students but also the community. He/she felt the college had a duty to serve the community. In addition to directing his/her efforts towards service, he/she valued his/her employees. He/she recognized individuals were attracted to educational careers for reasons other than the paycheck.

Competencies Important for Leaders

RQ2: How did community college presidents describe the competencies of leadership during this crisis?

In terms of effective leader competencies, several different competencies were mentioned. The presidents discussed the following competencies: positivity, empathy, calm demeanor, confidence, good communication skills, honesty, collaboration, resiliency, adaptability, emotional intelligence, admitting your mistakes, advocating for professional development at all levels, humor, trust, and data driven decision making. Good communication skills were the only competency that every president said was an essential leadership competency. Good communication skills were closely followed by resiliency which was discussed by four out of the five community college presidents. Although resiliency was not mentioned as a leadership competency, three presidents discussed this competency in terms of their faculty, staff and students. One president indicated the import of resiliency as a leadership competency. Three presidents indicated empathy was an essential leadership competency. The

leadership competencies of positivity, calm demeanor, honesty and trust were expressed by two presidents. The remaining leadership competencies, collaboration, emotional intelligence, admitting your mistakes, humor, adaptability, confidence, data driven decision making and advocating for professional development at all levels were indicated as important leadership competencies by only one president.

Initial Administrative Behaviors at the Beginning of the Pandemic

RQ3: How did community college presidents describe their initial administrative/leadership behaviors or steps they took early during this pandemic?

The community college presidents' initial administrative/leadership behaviors can be divided into six main categories: shifted to remote learning, return to face-to-face learning, communication, culture, financial issues, and mental health.

Shifted to Remote Learning

All five colleges extended spring break 2020 by a week to provide their faculty time to move classes to an online modality. Each college provided faculty support during this transition. For many instructors, this was their first remote teaching opportunity. In one case a consultant was hired to assist in the transition to remote learning. Each institution faced differing levels of pushback from faculty regarding the shift to remote learning. Overall, the presidents were pleased with the efforts of their faculty and staff. All five presidents recognized the hard work of their faculty and staff. Four colleges experienced decreased enrollment while the fifth college's enrollment increased. Those four presidents stated declining enrollment was at least partially due to moving to a remote learning format.

Return to Face-to-Face Learning

The colleges instituted task forces to facilitate the return to a face-to-face learning environment which occurred in fall 2020. Using expert advice, they developed phased return to campus plans with campus safety being the key priority. All five colleges did extra cleaning and ensured classrooms observed social distancing protocols. Some colleges installed Plexiglass when social distancing was not feasible. Hand sanitizer and cleaning materials were generally made available to employees and students. In some cases, the college provided students and employees with masks.

Communication

Communication was important to all five presidents. They worked diligently to ensure stakeholders, including employees, faculty, staff, board members, and the community, were kept abreast of the continuous pandemic changes. Additionally, they all created COVID-19 sections on their websites and communicated to their faculty and staff via newsletters. Three college newsletters were distributed weekly, one was sent twice per week, and one was sent as needed. Other commonly used communication mediums included emails, website, and videos.

Culture

Another common theme was community college culture. Four community college presidents felt their colleges performed best when they operated in a face-to-face environment. Online enrollment at the fifth community college had been rising exponentially for the past few years. Two of the four had been working to improve their campus culture. Of those working on their campus culture, one president used fun team building events to help build camaraderie and improve morale while the other president had created a task force. Two community college presidents experienced challenges filling job vacancies. One of these two presidents stated

salaries was an issue. One president recognized community college employees take these jobs at a lesser wage with greater responsibility because they find meaning and purpose in their positions. This same president ensured his/her employees' paychecks were kept whole despite working remotely. Staffing issues were exacerbated for two small community colleges whose departments often contained only one person.

Besides cultural issues, four presidents discussed the topic of resiliency. Two presidents were pleased and thought their faculty and staff were resilient in the face of adversity. One of the other two said some individuals shut down when they have to deal with hardships. The other president thought he/she had overestimated his/her employees' resiliency.

While the pandemic created many challenges, it also produced encouraging moments. A community college president discussed the outpouring of community support he/she received when the college moved to an online modality. They had several international students who could not go home. The president was overwhelmed with the number of individuals who volunteered to take these students into their homes.

Financial Issues

There were many financial unknowns. Two presidents mentioned the difficulty of trying to forecast the revenue streams including enrollment. Four colleges experienced declining enrollment. Despite declining face-to-face enrollment, the fifth college's overall enrollment increased due to increasing interest in online courses. Moreover, two presidents mentioned their concern over not knowing how government funds could be spent. Another president mentioned how the enrollment numbers did not follow the unemployment trends. Usually, community colleges were the big winners in these situations. However, instead enrollment numbers for community colleges decreased as unemployment increased.

Mental Health

The fear and uncertainty caused by the pandemic caused unprecedented mental health challenges. In addition to the isolation, the length of the pandemic was difficult. Two presidents specifically discussed the difficulty of establishing a rhythm. Just when people would think they could establish a sense of normalcy something would happen. Their child became ill, they became ill, etc. Different presidents approached the mental health challenge in diverse ways. Two presidents used snow days as a way to provide everyone a needed mental health break. Another president recommended his/her faculty and staff take remote coffee and lunch breaks with co-workers, take a walk, or read a book to help promote mental health. This president also stated sick days were not exclusively for your physical health but also included your mental health. One president said looking back, he/she would have established additional mental health resources. He/she had overestimated his/her employees' resiliency.

Governance

RQ4: How did community college presidents describe the experience of community college governance during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Every president discussed challenges regarding the polarizing opinions surrounding the pandemic. During the pandemic, at one point in time, each college instituted a mask mandate. Government mask mandates had provided a certain level of protection for the community colleges. Over time, however, views regarding masking became very political making future mask mandates challenging. Some presidents were concerned about potential political ramifications should they reinstate a mask mandate.

In addition to masking concerns, there were other political issues. One president discussed his/her concern about people intentionally changing the truth due to their political

views. Similar to national discussions, this same president thought the priority should be placed on the health and welfare of the many versus the individual. Other issues in the governance area included a lack of guidance regarding how government funds could be spent. Two college presidents specifically mentioned being concerned about the subjective manner in which expenses were deemed allowable. Two community colleges used government funding to provide vaccine incentives for their employees and students.

One president discussed an ethical issue concerning sports. He/she had experienced another community college team allowing a COVID-19 infected teammate to play in a game. From an ethical perspective, he/she understood the need to suspend sports. However, in terms of the student experience, as well as potential college revenue, he/she also understood the need to continue sports programs.

Cross-Case Analysis Summary

Five community college presidents participated in interviews and provided information for this multiple case study. Following the individual case representations, the five cases were compared with each other. This research's primary research question was: What are the perceptions of community college presidents of their leadership and decisions during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Although the presidents used different leadership styles, and referenced different leadership competencies, there were many similarities regarding their leadership and decisions. Many presidents referenced not having been prepared for a COVID-19 pandemic. They did not have a COVID-19 playbook and had not been trained to deal with this scenario. Additionally, due to a limited understanding of COVID-19, it caused a high level of uncertainty. Information regarding best practices for handling COVID-19 was constantly changing. Thus, presidents were

continuously digesting new information and understanding how that might impact their operational plans.

Focusing on the safety of their faculty, staff, students and the community, all five presidents established safety protocols. While prepping campuses for a safe return of face-to-face instruction, the presidents ensured their stakeholders were informed of their progress.

Continuous communication to all stakeholders during the pandemic was essential. Although they recognized the criticality of communication, their communication approaches were not the same.

Another commonality was the concern over mental health. Several presidents recognized the impact the isolation, fear, uncertainty, and loss of family and friends had on their faculty, staff and students. The longevity of the pandemic was also difficult. They all, however, did not address the mental health issues using the same approach.

Finally, all five presidents dealt with political pressures during the pandemic. In the beginning they were supported by government mandates. Over time, however, political opposition to mask mandates caused many colleges to eliminate or modify their mask mandates. They were concerned about political ramifications if they continued the mask mandates. In addition, some were concerned about loss of tuition since they thought students would go to schools without mask mandates.

Despite these similarities regarding their leadership and decisions, there were also many differences. One president had an extensive background in crisis preparedness, so his/her view regarding the pandemic differed from his/her peers. Having dealt with crises and emergencies, he/she followed similar emergency management procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic. He/she was able to leverage his/her past work experience.

Even though there were many challenges, there were some bright spots during the pandemic. While the other four community colleges experienced decreased enrollment during the pandemic, one college's enrollment actually increased. This same college built two new buildings that were 100% fundraised during the pandemic. With an emphasis on positivity and service, this president focused on moving the institution forward.

Summary

Five community college presidents led their college through the pandemic. There were many similarities to how they approached the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the primary research question, there were four sub questions:

1. How did community college presidents describe any changes to their leadership style and behaviors during this crisis?
2. How did community college presidents describe the characteristics of leadership during this crisis?
3. How did community college presidents describe their initial administrative/leadership behaviors or steps they took early during this pandemic?
4. How did community college presidents describe the experience of community college governance during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

The presidents felt their leadership style had not changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were three democratic leaders, one coaching leader, and one servant leader. The three democratic leaders emphasized collaboration. During the pandemic these presidents recognized it was not always feasible to gather everyone to obtain their feedback. Due to the criticality of the situation, decisions were made with those who were available. These leaders created cohesive, supportive work environments. They were concerned about how the pandemic

had negatively impacted their organizational culture. The coaching leader utilized a strengths based approach and leveraged his/her employee's talents. He/she stressed professional development of his/her employees so they could be empowered to make their own decisions. His/her leadership style was customized to meet the individual needs of his/her employees. Finally, the servant leader concentrated on service to others and focused on doing what is right. He/she firmly felt he/she had a duty to serve faculty, staff, students and the community.

Several different leadership competencies were mentioned by the presidents. They discussed the following competencies: positivity, empathy, calm demeanor, confidence, good communication skills, honesty, collaboration, resiliency, adaptability emotional intelligence, admitting your mistakes, professional development at all levels, data driven decision making, humor and trust. All five presidents thought good communication skills were a critical leadership competency. Resiliency was discussed by four presidents, but only one president specifically indicated it was a leadership competency. The other three referenced this competency in terms of their faculty, staff and students. Empathy was a critical leadership competency for three presidents. Only two presidents stated the import of positivity, calm demeanor, honesty and trust. Finally, only one president mentioned the leadership competencies of collaboration, emotional intelligence, admitting your mistakes, humor, adaptability, data driven decision making, advocating for professional development at all levels and confidence.

As they shifted to a remote learning environment, many of the five college presidents' initial administrative/leadership behaviors were similar. They extended their spring breaks to allow their faculty and staff time to transition to online learning. The presidents ensured their faculty were supported during the online transition. The colleges, however, encountered different levels of faculty support as they transitioned to an online modality, but most were delighted with

their faculty's response. The presidents acknowledged the wonderful work of their faculty and staff.

As they colleges returned to a face-to-face learning environment in fall 2020, the colleges used phased operational plans focusing on safety. The campuses were cleaned and prepped based on expert advice. The presidents stated the import of communication to keep their stakeholders informed. All five presidents created COVID-19 sections on their websites and communicated to their employees through newsletters. After that, their communication strategies diverged. The communication medium, frequency, and consistency varied amongst the presidents.

Some cultural issues arose due to the pandemic. Four presidents said their colleges worked best in face-to-face environments. Two presidents felt their culture had been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and were actively working to improve their campus culture. Two presidents had difficulty filling campus job vacancies. The inability to fill job vacancies intensified staffing issues since they were already facing staffing challenges due to COVID-19 illnesses. Of the two presidents dealing with cultural issues one president used team building events to build team spirit and boost morale, while the other president created a culture task force committee.

In addition to cultural issues, there were many unknowns. One of the unknowns was enrollment. The presidents spent an inordinate amount of time trying to predict revenues, particularly enrollment. This was further complicated by not understanding how government money could be spent. The unknown, uncertainty, and length of the pandemic also caused significant mental health challenges. The presidents dealt with these mental health issues differently. Some used snow days to provide a well needed mental health break, while others

recommended remote coffee and lunch breaks with their co-workers. Another president wished he/she had created additional mental health resources.

Besides the unknowns and mental health concerns, there was also discussion regarding community college governance. There were many diverse, polarizing opinions regarding the pandemic. Government mask mandates afforded a certain level of protection for the colleges. Political views towards masking, however, changed over time causing many colleges to modify or eliminate their mask mandates.

Chapter 5 - Analysis and Conclusions

Introduction

Chapter five includes a summary of the current study, a discussion of the major findings, recommendations for practice, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion. This study explored how the COVID-19 pandemic affected leadership styles and behaviors of Midwestern community college presidents. The research was driven primarily by one question regarding the president's understanding how their leadership style and behaviors had changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Summary

Campus crises, including natural disasters, health crises, and shooting incidents are happening almost daily (Norris et al., 2002a). In fact, about 69% of individuals will experience a crisis in their lifetime (Norris et al., 2002a). Timing is crucial in a crisis, and the organization's future may be in peril, so educational leaders must be ready to respond. Effective leaders successfully navigated the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding the leadership styles and behaviors used during the COVID-19 crisis helped inform crisis leadership best practices.

This research explored how the COVID-19 pandemic affected leadership styles and behaviors based on Midwestern community college presidents' perceived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conceptual framework, comprised of crisis leadership styles, effective leadership competencies, and crisis leadership competencies within the context of community college governance and the COVID-19 crisis, provided a crucial lens for examining and understanding effective community college leadership and decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were attained through interviews and artifacts. Artifacts included items such

as public COVID-19 sites, newsletters, emails and videos from the community college presidents.

Five Midwestern community college presidents were interviewed in early 2022 to ascertain their perceptions of their leadership and decisions during the COVID-19 global pandemic. This research had a central research question and four sub-questions:

What are the perceptions of community college presidents of their leadership and decisions during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Research Sub-questions:

1. How did community college presidents describe any changes to their leadership style and behaviors during this crisis?
2. How did community college presidents describe the characteristics of leadership during this crisis?
3. How did community college presidents describe their initial administrative/leadership behaviors or steps they took early during this pandemic?
4. How did community college presidents describe the experience of community college governance during the COVID-19 global pandemic?

Discussion of Major Findings

Out of the 15 essential crisis leadership competencies mentioned in this research, 14 matched the literature. The presidents in this study used three different leadership styles: democratic, servant, and coaching. Despite some similar behaviors, these leadership styles influenced how the presidents approached the pandemic. Finally, the five presidents demonstrated the five phases of crisis management.

Competencies Important for Leaders

In addition to leveraging their leadership competencies, leaders must use a proactive, holistic approach that carefully considers the “organization, the crisis, and the environment” (James & Wooten, 2005, p. 145). Thus, to successfully lead an organization through the crisis phases, crisis leaders must have a key set of competencies (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Rowe, 2008). Rowe (2008) asserted successful crisis leaders had ten competencies. Similarly, Wooten and James (2008) declared there are several key leadership competencies that are required during each crisis phase. Leaders possessing these critical competencies can effectively deal with the crisis (Brockner & James, 2008). In this research study, the presidents discussed the following competencies: positivity, empathy, calm demeanor, confidence, good communication skills, honesty, collaboration, resiliency, emotional intelligence, admitting your mistakes, advocating for professional development at levels, data driven decision making, adaptability, humor and trust.

Of the competencies mentioned by the presidents, the following matched the literature positivity (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020; Hammons & Heller, 1990; Luthans & Youssef, 2004), empathy (Pallapa, 2021; Plinske, 2008; Van Bommel, 2021), calm demeanor (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020; Kezar et al., 2006; Rowe, 2008), good communication skills (AACCC, 2018; Birnbaum, 1992; Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Harrison, 2016; Hood, 1997; Plinske, 2008; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997), collaboration (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Rowe, 2008), resiliency (Avey, 2011; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Wooten & James, 2008), emotional intelligence (American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC, 2018; Cherry, 2020; Goleman, 1998; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997; Kezar et al., 2006; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997), admitting your mistakes (Hansen, 2021; Rowe, 2008), data driven

decision making (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 2018), humor (Hammons & Keller, 1990), trust (Plinske, 2008), confidence (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Powell, 2004), adaptability (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997) and advocating for professional development at all levels (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Plinske, 2008). Although honesty was mentioned by one president from this study, it did not match any literature.

Calm Demeanor

Two community college presidents thought effective leaders should possess a calm demeanor during times of crisis. Both Rowe's (2008) and Kezar et al.'s (2006) research also confirmed this competency was important. By calmly handling situations leaders can avoid causing panic amongst their team (Rowe, 2008). "You can't panic, you need to remain calm" because "if you're panicking you're going to lose credibility." Staying composed is invaluable since it helps leaders maintain their focus during stressful times (Kezar et al., 2006).

Brassey and Kruyt (2020) asserted effective leaders should "lead with deliberate calm" (para. 2). Leaders must "make a deliberate choice to practice a calm state of mind" (para. 11). They must learn to become "comfortable with discomfort" and reframe this situation as an opportunity (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 11). This practice can result in increased organizational productivity as well as improved personal health (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). Leaders can harness this stress to obtain positive organizational results. As a result of the pandemic, one community college president eliminated the use of interactive television as a teaching medium. He/she preferred the use of Zoom because he/she was concerned students on the screen were being marginalized in comparison to the students in the room with the instructor.

He/she wanted “to have every single human on a screen...be at the same [level of] interaction with the faculty.”

The leader’s calm demeanor impacts others since individuals pick up on others’ emotions (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). When a leader is stressed or fearful those emotions severely impact the organization. Similarly, a calm leader can help employees face a crisis in a more productive manner (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020).

Positivity

Research conducted by the University of Michigan (Luthans & Youssef, 2004), Hammons & Keller (1990), and Rowe (2008), as well as two presidents from this research, indicated the criticality of positivity as a leadership competency (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). One president focused on having “a more positive outlook and to just keep moving forward.” Realizing “It’s a traumatic time...but at some point we have to step forward and live,” this president infused his/her communications with positivity. “I would like to again thank everyone for their work...” In another communication he/she stated, “Finish strong! We will get through this and back to a more normal world in time.”

Based on research studies conducted by the University of Michigan, positivity has been shown to increase a company’s ability to survive during a crisis (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). “When the path ahead is uncertain, people...want someone with a positive vision” (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 3). Positive leaders provide “hope for the future” (Rowe, 2008, para. 10). Further, effective leaders need to recognize that in a crisis, there is a natural tendency to see institutional threats instead of opportunities (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). It is not easy to maintain a balanced approach during difficult times. When faced with these challenging situations, leaders should redirect their focus from “negative explanations” and look for other potential answers

(Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 38). Reframing your perspective may help you find those critical solutions (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020).

In addition to reframing, leaders should utilize “integrative awareness” (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 7). Integrational awareness is having the awareness of “the changing reality” and how the leader is “responding emotionally and physically” (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 7). Leaders need to perceive challenges not as “roadblocks” but rather as “problems to be solved, and even learned from” (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 7).

Confidence

Two studies (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Powell, 2004) and one community college president from this research, mentioned the criticality of confidence as a leadership competency. Employees want leaders who are “confident about tackling the problems we all face” (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 3). One community college president said, “Confidence is also important” because “You need to believe in your strategy which you ultimately convey in your message.”

In crisis situations everyone wants the situation fixed as quickly as possible (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). Crises are very complex and using typical responses may not be effective and may even backfire (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). Although confidence is important, it is imperative leaders do not display excessive confidence or they may lose crucial credibility (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). Although employees want leaders who convey confidence, employees also desire leaders who recognize the gravity of the situation. Optimism that occurs due to authentic values can help propel the organization forward, but no one wants to “to follow a blind optimist” (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020, para. 16).

Collaboration

Besides confidence, collaboration was also mentioned as an important leadership competency (AACC, 2018; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Rowe, 2008). One community college president believes it was imperative to ensure team members shared “their thoughts and opinions” since “collaboration was critical.” Moreover, successful leaders recognize the power of collaboration since it provides the value of multiple perspectives (Rowe, 2008).

In addition to offering multiple perspectives, collaboration provides additional advantages. Collaboration is extremely useful for problem solving (Moseley, n.d.). By working with others, individuals can leverage their knowledge and obtain different perspectives and key insights (Moseley, n.d.). Collaboration, as one president stated, helps individuals recognize “they were not alone” and provided “multiple people to bounce their ideas off of.” Additionally, the pros and cons of potential solutions can be discussed. While working and learning from each other, the collaborative process helps build a cohesive team (Moseley, n.d.). Similarly, a community college president stated one of the benefits of collaboration was “the recognition that we’re all in it together.” Working together, individuals naturally start to develop greater trust which helps improve morale. Happier employees have greater retention rates and tend to be more efficient workers (Moseley, n.d.).

Emotional Intelligence

Regarding emotional intelligence, emotions can be used to persuade and motivate others, and some think emotions are the “heart of leadership” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 84). Many studies (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2018; Goleman, 1998; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997; Kezar et al., 2006; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997), and one community college president indicated the importance of effective leaders having high emotional

intelligence. One community college president felt emotional intelligence was one of the key competencies that “really shapes [your leadership].”

Cherry (2020) asserted emotional intelligence is comprised of four different levels beginning with the more basic and progressing to the more complex. The four levels are emotional perception, the capability to intellectualize using emotions, the capacity to understand emotions and finally the ability to manage those emotions (Cherry, 2020). Leaders with high emotional intelligence have high self-awareness. One president, who was extremely self-aware and concerned about the potential impacts of the pandemic on the community stated,

We have employees that have been here for thirty plus years and if they don't work at the college I don't know what they'd do in...County. That was the biggest pressure I felt all the way through this. If we get this wrong, I'll get fired but life will go on and I'll do something different. It may not be in the capacity I'm in it may be something different. But then if you start thinking about all the other personnel, people that are landlocked, their husbands or wives could be farmers in this community. They could be literally tied to the land. If they don't work at the college what do they do professionally? That takes on a different weight, that takes on a different enormity that bothered me more so than just about anything that we were going through.

Leaders with high emotional intelligence have a good understanding of what impacts their emotions and have the ability to understand the feelings of others (Cherry, 2020). By having insight into other's feelings, they have greater insight regarding the behavior of others (Cherry, 2020). This president had great insight regarding his/her employees. He/she said, “So, you're asking for people to be a part of something bigger than themselves and maybe take a

lesser wage with more responsibility. That's something I've always been extremely cognizant of..."

Empathy

Three community college presidents and two studies (Pallapa, 2021; Van Bommel, 2021), mentioned the import of leadership empathy. One president stated, "I think empathy is so critical...just because I view the world from one frame of reference, or one lens doesn't mean everyone else should." Empathetic leaders help to reduce employees' stress levels (Pallapa, 2021). Empathetic leaders create an environment of trust which fosters employee innovation and creativity (Pallapa, 2021). Based on research conducted by Catalyst, empathy contributes to positive employee results including engagement and inclusion (Van Bommel, 2021).

Van Bommel (2021) declared "empathy is a must-have in today's workplace"..."especially in times of crisis" (para. 2). Due to pandemic uncertainty, employee burnout is common and is causing increasing employee turnover. One of the presidents discussed the emotional aspects of the pandemic due to "losing faculty, losing students" as well as the "fear" and "uncertainty." Due to these hardships, he/she brought in a motivational speaker "to give people different ways to think about" the pandemic and to help "people understand why they feel the way they feel." Another president stated, "to be as effective as possible in the classroom, with administration, with staff, I believe a person needs to have love and compassion in one's heart for others." He/she continued, "That is the foundation from which everything else is built in my opinion."

As a result, many employers find themselves facing what has been called the Great Resignation. Employees want leaders who recognize these adversities. According to Catalyst research, it is essential leaders "think people, not just programs" (Van Bommel, 2021, para. 5).

Van Bommel (2021) furthered, “cultivating empathic leadership is an effective strategy to respond to crisis with the heart and authenticity that many employees crave—and boost productivity” (para. 5). Employees with empathetic leaders feel more empowered leading to lower organizational attrition (Pallapa, 2021).

Good Communication Skills

Four out of five community college presidents and several studies (AACC, 2018; Birnbaum, 1992; Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Harrison, 2016; Hood, 1997; Plinske, 2008; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997) stated good communication skills were an essential leadership competency. “Good communications skills were important,” said one president. He/she furthered,

We did the best we could to communicate. Communication was absolutely key. If we had to overcommunicate we’d overcommunicate. It was better to have too much information than not enough. We don’t want people filling in what they don’t understand about our expectations...

To be effective, leaders must have outstanding formal and informal communication and consistently present a professional image across all communication mediums (AACC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hood, 1997). Another president commented, “You really had to balance and understand your audience and what the content of your message was...” They “used multiple forms of communication and depending upon the message [they] would decide what format that would be in...” In fact, he/she noticed they had increased engagement when they used Zoom. He/she said,

when the president has an open forum you might get a third of your employees. So, when we would do things on Zoom we would probably have 65-70% of our employees engaged no matter what the topic was... We think it was because it was on Zoom.

Additionally, successful leaders must have the ability to create persuasive appeals.

Following a crisis, individuals have a strong desire for knowledge so providing key resource information in a timely manner can help reduce anxiety (Flynn & Sharma, 2016).

Also, good communication skills are an essential component of institutional success (Bosworth, n.d.). Good communication skills minimize organizational conflict since poor communication is often a root cause. Miscommunication can occur when individuals are using different communication patterns. Understanding the communication patterns of the receiver is essential for good communication. Often slight communication adjustments can eliminate misunderstandings. It is also critical to ensure employees feel their emotional needs are recognized and respected (Bosworth, n.d.).

Effective communication is “about connecting with people” (Bosworth, n.d., para. 7). Enhancing workplace communication can help improve the work environment and employee engagement. Engaged employees are more productive since they are aligned with the organization’s goals and objectives (Bosworth, n.d.). Moreover, employees who have good communication skills more effectively communicate with others leading to better internal and external customer relationships (Bosworth, n.d.). One president used “a model of constant communication” which [he/she] referred to as a “McDonald’s model of consistency.” His/her communications were “very purposeful and predictable.” Employees would receive communications at “11 AM on Monday” and “on Friday morning at 8 AM” each week. He/she

said he/she had “a duty of care to ensure everyone stays informed.” He/she discussed the “critical importance of communication and just continuously communicating.”

Resiliency

Although not referenced as a leadership competency, three presidents discussed the resiliency of their faculty, staff and students. Additionally, the import of resiliency was mentioned in several studies (Avey, 2011; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Wooten & James, 2008). One president specifically discussed resiliency as an important leadership competency. This president stated, “But I think you have to keep being resilient knowing you’re going to put one foot in front of the other and keep moving forward whether you want to or not.” Resilient employees are more likely to “weather the storm” organizations face compared to their less resilient counterparts (Avey, 2011). A president commented, “But I’ve been so impressed with the...resiliency of our people, and I’m very much appreciative of it.” Another commented, “I saw an increase in resiliency...that’s the spirit of...”

Resiliency is one of the four components of positive organizational behavior (POB). In the late 1990s, due to positive psychology, individuals started focusing on increasing individual productivity and “actualizing human potential” (Luthans & Youssef, 2004, p. 151). Positive organizational behavior (POB), can be “measured, developed and managed for performance” at work and is comprised of four elements which include self-efficacy/confidence, hope, optimism, and resiliency (Luthans & Youssef, 2004, p. 152). One president thought your “outlook is critical” and is a critical component of whether your actions will “have a positive outcome.” He/she furthered, “We have all these things we want to accomplish let’s move forward if we don’t it’s not going to end well for us.”

Leaders should be cognizant that their employees are continuously watching and will emulate the leader's actions during a crisis (Modglin, 2017). If leaders demonstrate resiliency, their employees will emulate these actions. However, if leaders demonstrate a lack of resolve, employees will learn and model those actions. Modeling resiliency is essential to encourage and influence others to confront their own resiliency (Modglin, 2017).

Adaptability

One president and two studies (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997) referenced the criticality of leadership adaptability. In fact, recruitment expert Michael Page deemed accountability “the most desirable skill of 2019” (2019, para.1). Adaptive leaders easily adjust and are not dismayed when situations do not go as planned (Kiddy & Partners, 2020). Instead, these leaders are nimble and view these situations as learning opportunities (Kiddy & Partners, 2020). Although they may use past experiences to solve problems they are equally open to trying new approaches. “COVID-19 has challenged the survival of every organization...in order to lead their people and organisations effectively, now and in the future, adaptability in leaders is not desirable; it's vital” (Kiddy & Partners, 2020, para.1).

Admit Your Mistakes

Although more than one president mentioned that mistakes had been made, only one president stated the import of owning your mistakes. Owning your mistakes was also mentioned in the literature (Hansen, 2021; Rowe, 2008). Effective leaders take risks and mistakes will be made (Hansen, 2021; Rowe, 2008). However, leaders who admit they have made mistakes build critical trust with their followers (Hansen, 2021). Further, these mistakes offer leaders vital learning opportunities (Hansen, 2021). Leaders can evaluate their mistakes and gain crucial

understanding putting them in a better position to handle future obstacles (Hansen, 2021).

Greater learning occurs when we fail than when we succeed (Hansen, 2021).

Data Driven Decision Making

According to the AACCC (2018) and one president from this research, using data to make decisions was a key competency. Through data analysis, leaders can make better operational decisions and also may discover new trends or even new concerns (AACCC, 2018). Although past experience is invaluable, studies show basing your decisions on data results in improved financial outcomes (Marr, 2021).

Advocating for Professional Development at All Levels

Promoting professional development was considered a critical competency by one president from this research and many studies (AACCC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Plinske, 2008). Effective leaders recognize investing in employees' professional development is not only a key competency (Desjardins & Huff, 2001; Plinske, 2008) but is critical to the organization's survival (AACCC, 2018). Successful leaders connect employee professional development to the college's strategic direction (AACCC, 2018; Desjardins & Huff, 2001). In addition, effective leaders realize failure to invest in their most critical asset could "result in the institution regressing instead of progressing" (AACCC, 2018, p. 82).

Humor

Humor, which Hammons and Keller (1990) defined as "The ability to see the humor in a situation" and "Includes the ability and willingness to laugh at oneself" (para. 28), was mentioned as a critical leadership competency by one study (Hammons & Keller, 1990) and one president from this research. Beard (2014) asserted, "the workplace needs laughter" since laughter "relieves stress and boredom, boosts engagement and well-being, and spurs not only

creativity and collaboration but also analytic precision and productivity” (para. 1). Despite the positive aspects of laughing, Eric Tsytsylin, an MBA candidate, stated adults are in a “laughter drought” (as cited in Beard, 2014, para. 2). Although babies laugh approximately 400 times daily, individuals over the age of 35 laugh only 15 times daily (Beard, 2014).

Trust

One research study (Plinske, 2008) and one president from this research study indicated trust was a critical leadership competency. There are several benefits of having trust in an organization (Lewis, 2021). According to research conducted by Paul Zak, when working in companies with high trust, workers reported 74% less stress, 106% greater energy, 50% increased productivity and 76% greater engagement (Zak, 2017). To develop trust within an organization, mutual trust must exist between the leader and their team (Lewis, 2021). Leaders should provide some degree of autonomy which demonstrates they trust their team.

Leadership Style

Three different leadership styles were used by the five community college presidents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three presidents used a democratic leadership style, one used a servant leadership approach, and the other president utilized a coaching leadership style. The leadership styles used influenced how the presidents approached the pandemic. Although there were many similar behaviors amongst the five presidents, there were some differences based on their leadership style.

Democratic Leaders

Focusing on employee engagement and collaboration, three president’s demonstrated competencies of democratic leadership. These leaders provided guidance and wanted their followers to be actively involved and feel good about their role in decision-making processes

(Ahmed et al., 2018; Debell, 2019; Malos, 2012). One president stated he/she “learned to value the people on the ground floor, to listen, to value that type of feedback...I want their feedback; I need their feedback.” Although these leaders favored “collegial” decision-making, gathering everyone when decisions had to be made quickly was not always feasible. Decisions were often made with those who were available “to help make that decision. That’s how that happened.”

In addition to gathering employee feedback, the democratic leaders were supportive. The presidents were concerned the pandemic had adversely impacted their culture because “what [they] do best is the one-on-one interaction.” Working remotely had a greater cultural impact than these leaders had anticipated. One president related he/she had “underestimated the impact of not being together.” People were losing that interpersonal connectivity that helps build organizational culture. The everyday watercooler talk was non-existent. Using Zoom and Teams for meetings was helpful, but even those tools had their limitations. One president noted his/her preference for in person meetings. He/she stated, “People can see me and know when I’m joking and when I’m not.” Another president engaged his/her employees in different ways in an attempt to improve morale. All three democratic leaders faced staffing issues. As stated by one president, “One of our challenges as a result of COVID-19, but we’ve always kind of had, but it’s been amped up, is staffing.” The college has “had twice as many openings as we’ve typically had in the 8 plus years” he/she had been there.

Like democratic leaders, these community college presidents were not risk averse (Debell, 2019). They were willing to try new approaches. One president remarked, “I’d like to think that we listen, and we’re open to trying new things and taking calculated risks.” The presidents encouraged debates and diverging opinions by creating safe work environments. A president commented, “I don’t want yes people; I’m looking for people that disagree with me

and provide new ideas.” Democratic leaders also showed their support by emphasizing employee’s strengths instead of their mistakes (Bass, 1990; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018; Malos, 2012). Thus, employees were committed to performing their work since they frequently worked in small groups and felt their work would be observed and valued (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018). Similarly, one of the community college presidents related, “We try to watch out for each other, we’re small.”

Servant Leaders

Unlike traditional leadership styles which focus on organizational success, servant leadership emphasizes service to followers (Greenleaf, 1977). The servant leader always placed the needs of others first. He/she stated, “if you do the right thing you’ll get the right results.” It was important that he/she and his/her staff were “still serving students, serving each other.” He/she humbly accepted any responsibility. He/she said, “I openly told people if we need to serve students [meals] in the dorms I’ll do it, it’s not a problem.” This president was not only committed to his/her faculty and staff but also had a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the local community. He/she was gravely concerned for his/her community. He/she stated,

the thing that keeps me up at night the most it is that we are an economic driver in such a small community. You take away 150 full time jobs in our area, if for any reason the college makes a miscalculation a misstep and we’re no longer here, property valuations in...County are worth nothing.

Servant leaders are very self-aware. This was clearly evident in his/her communication model he/she referred as a “McDonald’s model of consistency.” Communications were sent at regular intervals to provide stability to his/her faculty and staff in an otherwise chaotic environment. He/she had “a duty of care to ensure everyone stay[ed] informed.” His/her empathy

and concern for his/her faculty, staff and students resonated in his/her heartfelt, positive communications. He/she used words such as “hope,” “good news,” “brighter tomorrow,” “fortunate,” “gratitude,” “wonderful,” and “future.” He/she displayed his/her positivity in his/her communications with statements “we are all one day closer to some good news” and “this is a challenging and unique time, but we will get through it together.”

Servant leaders have a strong follower orientation which enables them to build strong relationships within the organization (van Dierendonck, 2011). Concerned for his/her employees’ welfare, this community college president kept his/her employees’ paychecks whole even while the community college worked remotely. “You start talking about your custodial all the way to your maintenance staff.” Unlike many community colleges, his/her enrollment numbers actually increased during the pandemic. Additionally, there was no mention of staffing or cultural issues. Focusing on service to others and recognizing each person’s inherent value helps build strong relationships within the organization.

Coaching Leaders

The coaching leader emphasized employee development. According to Berg, coaching leaders encourage their employees to personally act and be accountable (as cited in Vesso & Alas, 2016). Thus, leaders focus on developing their employees’ as well as creating a supportive work environment (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Hunt & Weintraub, 2002; Vesso & Alas, 2016). Creating a safe work environment not only strengthens relationships and self-confidence it also fosters creativity and motivation (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Sutton, 2021). Acting like coaches, these leaders actively partner and collaborate with their employees (Sutton, 2021). After assessing his/her employees’ “skills, knowledge, abilities and experiences,” one president used a strengths-based approach to empower his/her faculty and staff to make their own decisions.

Coaching leaders allow their employees to work independently. Instead of top-down decision making these leaders actively guide and support their employees (Sutton, 2021). Leaders let their employees complete their work and do not micro-manage them. By allowing employees to develop their own solutions, the typically paternalistic employee-manager relationship shifts to one that is based on mutual respect and cooperation (Mukherjee, 2012; Wood, 2011). The president felt “he/she shouldn’t be in the minutia...Faculty have been given the autonomy to move classes online if they or many of their students are ill. There is no reason to have so many rules.” It was also important that faculty and staff utilized “good conflict resolution practices and build that trust to help us make better decisions about what we’re going to do and how we’re going to move forward.” During the pandemic, enrollment decreased which was largely attributed to students not wanting to take online courses. Like the servant leader, there was no mention of staffing or cultural issues.

He/she effectively utilized his/her communication skills throughout the pandemic. His/her YouTube videos were extremely compelling. One of the videos was filmed from inside his/her home. The videos were incredibly personalized and engaging. He/she would weave in information about the local culture as well as his/her family. The videos made it feel like she was talking to you personally. During the videos individuals were personally recognized for their pandemic contributions. Even though his/her college did not have clearly articulated values, he/she quickly recognized what those values were. The college valued authenticity and honesty. As a result, in spring 2020 the college decided the format of fall 2020 classes so students would not be surprised. He/she stated, “We thought that those values of authenticity and honesty were more important than the enrollment numbers.”

Crisis Management Process

During each crisis management phase, different leadership competencies gain importance. Effective leaders understand this and successfully leverage these competencies. Pearson and Mitroff's (1993) five phase crisis management process, consisting of signal detection, preparation and prevention, damage containment, recovery and learning, was used for this research. The five presidents in this case study research demonstrated these in their leadership during COVID-19.

Signal Detection

In the first phase, signal detection, leaders should perceive early warnings of a potential crisis. One president received a warning from his/her son in December 2019, telling him "you have to pay attention to this thing called COVID-19." Another president, was forwarded information from his/her board in early 2020. He/she commented, "not knowing that it would ever turn into anything like it has, not knowing it would ever be any type of situation like that."

During this phase, the essential competency is sense-making. According to Weick et al. (2005), sense making is comprised of three key questions: How does a situation become an event? What is the meaning of the event? How should I respond to the event? Unfortunately, leaders, like the two community college presidents, do not always sense the approaching crisis (James & Wooten, 2010). Both presidents were surprised when they received word at different higher education events that colleges were shifting to remote learning. One president was attending a meeting with all the state college presidents. During this meeting, "The University of...made an announcement to go through and shift to remote operations. It was one of the strangest feelings for me." The president continued, "I thought they were full of crap, why would they do that? This seems like such an overreaction...And soon you start to see the dominoes fall

one by one by one.” Another president was attending an educational event asking for input from parents and students regarding how the college should respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. He/she stated, “I’m asking the parents; I’m asking the students literally what do you think we should do?” He/she received responses “its media hype...it’s overblown.”

In addition to sense-making, it is imperative to understand another person’s viewpoint (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Understanding others’ perspectives enables leaders to demonstrate empathy towards stakeholders which is a key leadership competency (James & Wooten, 2010). One president always tried to consider others’ viewpoints. He/she stated, “I always think of [COVID-19] from the student perspective and how weird this must be. Then I think of it from our employee perspective, our faculty perspective...” Similarly, another president commented, “We had to listen to our faculty. We had to listen to our student experience. We had to listen to the different parts of the institution to understand how to approach it.” One president “had people travelling and going to different events.” He/she continued,

I remember our rodeo coach being so upset with us saying...[our college] would be the only one not participating in the rodeo. All of our coaches were so frustrated, so upset, but again just trying to go through and make the best of a bad situation trying to figure out what do we do to keep people safe. As we went through and looked at everything operationally that was always paramount in every decision we made.

Some faculty had never taught online and did not favor using a remote learning modality. According to one president, he/she had “some instructors who didn’t believe in online courses. They didn’t believe [remote learning] was a very effective way to deliver and assess content and never intended to do that...” He/she thought this was the reason why some faculty left.

Moreover, some students “didn’t want to take courses using this format either” which resulted in declining enrollment. Others had a different experience. A president commented, “And faculty here, like many places, did not want to fail their students in terms of...the opportunity to continue their education. So, they responded, although not everybody. But the vast majority did wonderfully.” Another president said, “The faculty worked tirelessly to make sure that students completed what they needed to earn their degree...They were just amazing.” Perspective taking is particularly useful in the signal detection stage since failure to consider the ramifications of events can be construed as being insensitive (James & Wooten, 2010). According to James and Wooten (2010), perspective taking differentiates crises leaders from crisis managers.

Preparation and Prevention

The second phase of crisis management is preparation and prevention (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Zdziarski et al., 2007). During this critical phase of crisis management, all campus stakeholders must be cognizant of and fervently working towards preventing any prospective crisis situations (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Zdziarski et al., 2007). In this phase institutions examine the types of crises they are likely to experience and develop plans to prevent them from happening or minimize their impact.

Pandemic planning did not appear to be part of the crisis planning process at the community colleges included in this research project. One president commented, “None of us have a playbook for a pandemic. So, [we’re] trying to go through and figure out what to do...no one’s gone through this type of thing.” Another president stated, “I didn’t have a playbook for operating during a pandemic...I never took a class regarding how to deal with a pandemic and no one else had either...” Similarly, a president indicated, “there is no playbook for what is happening in our world...we haven’t trained for this, no one has.” Moreover, another president

discussed, “Unfortunately, we didn’t have any guidelines to help us navigate or negotiate through how to respond to a pandemic.”

One president had an extensive background in strategic crisis planning. When asked what the most frequent crises are in higher education, he/she stated,

The most frequent crisis in higher education [are] related to information technology and someone infiltrating our system. So, that right now is the most frequently used tabletop exercise in higher education. The second one is probably weather. So, depending upon where you live doing tabletops related to tornadoes, hurricanes, incredibly powerful winter storms, floods, whatever that might be those are the most frequent.

He/she continued, other crises issues regarding “free speech is a fairly common crisis piece right now.” He/she said students may be “targeted individually or because of who they are or where they come from, their ethnicity, their gender, their sexual orientation.” He/she commented, it is important to recognize what occurs is “no longer a private incident and recognizing that” it can become “a social media storm.” Also...he/she discussed, “you have to be prepared for, is a fire in the residence hall, a murder on campus, or a high profile reported sexual assault. Those are fairly common emergencies as well as student suicide.” He/she also indicated that even though there are different types of crises they “all have the same foundational approaches in that you’ve got to have an incident commander and the folks who are starting to work on the recovery part.”

Damage Containment and Control

During the third phase of crisis management, damage control and containment, effective leaders attempt to restrict organizational threats and solve crisis as quickly as possible (James & Wooten, 2010). A great deal of time is typically spent in this phase; so, this is the phase that typically resonates in the minds of stakeholders (James & Wooten, 2010). When the event is

perceived as a crisis, leaders often feel anxious which can impair the leader's decision-making ability (Brockner & James, 2008; James & Wooten, 2010; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). One president relayed his/her feelings at the crisis onset:

Many of the decisions we were making at the time were based on our lack of understanding of coronavirus...I hate to use the term panicky, but we just didn't know anything about COVID-19 and how we should respond...We tried to manage the mental anguish or the elevated sense of anxiety and stress. It took its toll on us as well as our students and everyone involved including of course people in general and society as a whole. We are still being affected by it I believe as well.

In this phase an essential leadership competency is the ability to make quick decisions in stressful situations (Wooten & James, 2008). All five presidents were focused on safety for their faculty, staff, students and their community. Comments from the presidents included, "we kept everyone's safety paramount with any decision that came across our desk," "the thing that has been driving us from the get-go is the safety of our campus constituency and our community," "The first thing you try to do is maintain the health and safety of everyone there I think," "our intent is to help keep them, our students, and our community as safe as we possibly can" and we want to "provide a safe learning and working environment."

Like Johnson and Johnson's (J and J's) handling of the 1982 Tylenol poisonings, the community colleges prioritized safety over finances (Albrecht, 1996). For example, one community college president committed to keep all employees' paychecks whole even though employees worked remotely. He/she stated this included "your custodial all the way to your maintenance staff." This was done even though there were financial concerns regarding what may happen with enrollment. Similarly, that same president stated,

we lost a ton of money doing a variety of different things whether we limited face-to-face capacity in classes, paid instructors on double section, went through and alternated what employees could be in there. We have lost so much money through productivity. But again, I can look people in the face, and we did the best we can to keep people safe.

At another community college, they wrote checks to students for “\$450,000 which became lost revenue” for “unused room and board for the second half of the spring semester.” This president stated, “At least with the pandemic our number one objective all along has been safety of our staff, students, our campus and our community.” Besides refunding unused room and board, many community colleges experienced declining enrollments as they focused on safety and shifted to an online modality. One president commented, “Our enrollment was down... We believe that was because people didn’t want online learning.”

During the pandemic, similar to the 1982 Tylenol poisonings, the community college presidents demonstrated a close connection existed between leadership and crisis (Boin & ‘t Hart, 2003; Schoenberg, 2005). It is natural for people to look to leadership for answers during a crisis (Boin & ‘t Hart, 2003). If handled successfully, these leaders are heralded as heroes; however, if the opposite occurs, leadership is typically blamed. Thus, due to these challenges, leaders often view their crisis leadership experiences as pivotal points in their career (Boin & ‘t Hart, 2003).

In the damage containment phase, response teams are activated (Zdziarski et al., 2007). The community college presidents activated emergency response teams and delayed the end of their spring breaks to provide faculty and staff time to shift to a remote modality. The presidents had to act quickly because the situation was evolving rapidly, and students needed to be notified so they could pack up their stuff. The community college emergency response teams developed

phased operational plans. Employees were quickly classified as either essential or non-essential and all five colleges created COVID-19 websites. Although each COVID-19 website was slightly different, the overall approach was the same. The intent was to provide continuing COVID-19 information as well as student resources which often included information regarding COVID-19 related government aid, COVID-19 testing locations and student housing safety. Every president instituted a campus mask mandate. Additionally, accrediting bodies had to be contacted for approval to shift courses online.

One of the key competencies in the damage containment and control phase is ensuring effective leaders understand the import of risk taking since decision makers often limit potential choices based on past actions (Wooten & James, 2008; Staw et al., 1981). By being too risk averse leaders may inhibit the organization's ability to overcome a crisis (Wooten & James, 2008). Using CDC and local health department guidance, the colleges prepared their facilities for a return to face-to-face learning. Facilities received deep cleaning and sanitizing supplies were provided in classrooms. Desks were removed in classrooms to ensure appropriate social distancing guidelines were followed. Some colleges provided masks and face shields for their students and employees. One college adjusted their systems to maximize the flow of outdoor air and minimize air recycling. Another college invested in Clorox cleaning machines to facilitate the cleaning of their sports facility.

Effective communication is another essential competency in the damage containment and control phase since personal relationships will be tested during these stressful times (Wooten & James, 2008). An important theme for all five presidents was communication. They worked tirelessly to ensure they kept their stakeholders aware of the continually changing and at times

confusing pandemic information. Stakeholders included faculty, staff, board members, students, and governmental agencies such as health departments and accrediting agencies.

During a crisis, successful leaders emotionally connect with their stakeholders (Sturges, 1994). Believing in the power of positivity, one president infused his/her communications with positive words such as “hope,” “good news,” “brighter tomorrow,” “fortunate,” “gratitude,” and “wonderful.” Other presidents’ messages also focused on positivity. A president stated, “Take care of yourself and your family. I hope to see you soon.” To help forge a bond with his/her staff, a community college president used employee shared photos and stories in his/her communications. The presidents frequently recognized the extraordinary efforts of their faculty and staff.

Based on the message recipient and the message, different communication mediums were utilized. All five colleges communicated to their faculty and staff via newsletters as well as Zoom and Teams. Some other commonly used communication mediums included emails, website updates, and videos. Each college had a COVID-19 specific section on their website. Presidents also discussed the importance to communicate the why since people respond better if they understand the reasons for the change. As one president noted, we “don’t spend enough time talking about the why.”

In addition to communication medium choice, there were some strategic aspects of communication. Communications may be designed to influence others. At one college although the communications were developed by others, to ensure the communications were taken seriously, they were all sent under the president’s signature.

In addition to strategic elements, there was also uncertainty. One president mentioned he/she would have utilized different messaging had he/she initially known the pandemic length.

The limited understanding of COVID-19 also led to uncertainty and confusion. Besides, the guidance regarding COVID-19 was continually changing which left individuals looking to leaders for answers. After stating, “I don’t know how this is going to work out,” a president said he/she received criticism for making that comment. The large number of unknowns surrounding COVID-19 resulted in confusion, anger and frustration.

Dealing with the uncertainty was difficult. The community college presidents continuously acknowledged the stalwart efforts of their faculty and staff in their communications by making comments such as “I cannot thank you enough for your remarkable response to the COVID-19 crisis.” In addition, the presidents’ communications were also positive and supportive. Presidents’ comments included: “We are looking forward to a brighter tomorrow.,” “Tough times never last but tough people do.,” and “Finish Strong! We’ll get through this and back to a more normal world in time.” Some communications focused on building team spirit. These included: “We will get through it together. I look forward to seeing everyone soon. Take care,” “We will get through these challenging times as a team,” and “It was great to see everyone back on campus this week!” Lastly, some presidents’ comments were focused on their team’s mental health. These communications included comments such as: “Please take good care of you. You matter.” and “I hope everyone is doing well.”

An essential aspect of containing the pandemic damage, in addition to communication, was controlling the financial impact. There were many financial unknowns due to COVID-19. Colleges were experiencing difficulty budgeting their revenue streams including enrollment. Presidents were spending inordinate amounts of time on their budgets. Four institutions faced declining enrollments. One college had a three year enrollment decline “of almost 20%” which was partly “due to demographics” and partly “due to the pandemic.” At times, another college’s

enrollment was 40% behind and they were anticipating a 10% cut from the state. The president related, "...what are we going to have to do here to keep our doors open?" In the end, the college was "1% down in enrollment and the 10% cut from the state never materialized." One institution had increasing enrollments, but the devil was in the details. The president stated,

Our enrollments have gone up. But, if I dissect the data and say...really look at this with me. You can see our face-to-face enrollment has continued to go down for the past seven years while our online enrollment has gone up exponentially every year.

As a result, the president was questioning whether they should be making future investments in brick and mortar. It was also noted unlike past years, the enrollment numbers did not follow unemployment trends. Community college enrollment decreased as unemployment levels increased.

Another issue was related to government funding. One president had spent "probably \$100k in testing that" if he/she had contacted the right individuals he/she "could have probably got some of those things for free." He/she was part of a committee "for requesting those funds but then [when they] got around to distribution...nobody notified us. So missed opportunities" were a big challenge. In a related government funding issue, the government passed some legislation to assist higher education, however there were some questions regarding how the funds could be spent. Two colleges used government funding to incentivize students and employees to get vaccinated. One president discussed, "I pay for less testing if there are more people vaccinated. It has helped us. It's not perfect...I think that's helped us in the long run in terms of this academic year."

As well as financial issues, governance was a common theme during the damage containment and control phase. The polarizing opinions regarding the pandemic presented

challenges for the educational institutions. During the pandemic, each college had a mask mandate. The government mask mandates afforded a certain level of protection for the community colleges, however; over time political viewpoints made mask mandates extremely difficult. Most institutions relented to the demands of their local culture and eliminated their mask mandates. Some worried about potential political ramifications if a mask mandate was reinstated, while; others chose to eliminate mask mandates because they were not easily enforced, or they were concerned about losing enrollment.

Masking was not the only political issue. A president was troubled by individuals purposely changing the truth due to their political viewpoints. This president also thought, like many national discussions, the priority should be on the health and welfare of the many not the individual. Other concerns included a lack of guidance in terms of how government funds could be spent. Using government funding, two colleges incentivized their employees and students to get vaccinated.

Another political issue, raised by one president, was regarding the ethics of continuing college sports. This community college president had experienced another community college team allowing a COVID-19 infected teammate to play in a game. This president could understand, from an ethical viewpoint, the need to suspend college sports. However, he/she also recognized the need for a normative student experience as well as potential revenue that sporting events can provide educational institutions.

Recovery

The fourth crisis phase is recovery. An organization's recovery time varies widely and is based upon the relationship existing between resource availability and the amount of resources required to handle the crisis (Zdziarski et al., 2007). For some crises, assistance from outside

agencies may be required. Organizations implement short and long term business recovery plans to help the institution resume normal operations (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). In some situations, the crisis may be used as a catalyst for organizational change (Brockner & James, 2008).

In attempting to resume normal operations, culture was a common theme. One aspect of culture was the face-to-face component. Although community colleges can function in an online environment the presidents felt they were “not the same college.” Community colleges function best with one-on-one interactions. Moreover, students desired the traditional college experience.

In addition to the face-to-face component, another aspect of resuming normal operations was a focus on organizational culture. Two presidents were actively working to improve their campus culture. One was using team building events to help improve morale and camaraderie, while; the other president had created a task force. Two presidents had challenges filling job vacancies. One of those presidents thought salary was an issue.

Small colleges, which often had departments containing one person, were greatly impacted by staffing issues. A president stated employees take community college positions at a lower salary with greater responsibility because they find meaning and purpose in these positions. This same president had ensured all his/her employees’ paychecks were kept whole even while they worked remotely. Another president thought faculty resigned because they did not want to teach online classes.

In addition to staffing issues, the topic of resiliency was mentioned by four presidents. Two presidents thought their faculty and staff had shown resiliency during the pandemic. One president thought some people tended to shut down when facing adversity. The other president stated he/she had overestimated his/her employees’ resiliency.

Although there was a focus on resuming normal business operations, the crisis also served as a catalyst. It helped create a new focus on mental health issues. As stated by one president, the pandemic brought “new unprecedented challenges to maintaining physical and mental health.” Reflecting one president stated, “I probably would have brought more face-to-face mental health opportunities on campus for people...The isolation definitely has a mental impact.” The necessity to quarantine increased the pandemic mental health impact since personal isolation can increase the likelihood and severity of conditions such as depression and anxiety (Xiao, 2020). Additionally, the necessity to quarantine made interventions such as counseling more difficult (Xiao, 2020). The pandemic was an extraordinary experience due to how swiftly it happened as well as its longevity (Copeland et al., 2021).

Different presidents handled the mental health issues differently. Some used snow days as mental health days. One president informed his/her staff that “a sick day includes your mental health not just your physical health.” Other approaches included recommending employees take remote coffee and lunch breaks with co-workers, take a walk, or read a book to help their mental health.

Learning

The final crisis phase is learning. It is imperative leaders take the time to reflect regarding what went well and what could have been done better (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Reflecting on what he/she would have done differently in the early days of the pandemic, one president stated,

I probably would have just kept reassuring people that everything is going to be okay. I know I did that throughout it, but again there was almost like an impending doom for certain people...I heard one person say before the pandemic there were people who were

mentally struggling on the fringe, just different levels of emotional fragility and the pandemic did not help them. I think I told you this the last time we met I have a sense of resilience that it's going to be okay, and I don't think everyone believes that. So, I probably would have been more empathetic to that and kept reassuring people.

Regarding communication, he/she stated, "As soon as I [received] information I would disseminate it to everybody. I don't know if" that was

always the best thing to do because although you always want to be honest and upfront with people but at times that can create a sense of angst. So maybe I would have cut back on some of the communication, but it really goes against the grain for me to want to do that.

Looking back on his/her early pandemic leadership actions, another president said,

Well knowing what you know now, and you didn't have it then, it would have been to prepare people for a longer haul...If you know it's going to be a long siege you approach things differently. Your strategies would be different. The message you're conveying would be different.

Every situation provides invaluable information that will inform the next crisis event.

Following a crisis, leaders should review the crisis management plan and make all necessary changes. Effective leaders recognize that crises provide organizations unique opportunities to make organizational changes (Wooten & James, 2008). One president used the pandemic as an opportunity to eliminate "teaching with interactive television...It was...a chance to throw that in the garbage because there's always an ingroup and an outgroup." He/she stated, "The pandemic gave us opportunities to have conversations that we didn't want to have. I took advantage of every one of those opportunities."

Moreover, knowledge obtained in a crisis can provide critical leadership insights (Wooten & James, 2008). Due to the pandemic one president “identified challenges” where they were “not as good as” they thought. The pandemic has “pointed out some challenges, some weaknesses” and now “we’ve got an opportunity...to repair that and to ramp us up and to make us better in that regard.” We are still facing challenges regarding COVID-19. Hopefully, some of the worst aspects of the pandemic are behind us. COVID-19 has taught us the import of teamwork and collaboration (AACC, 2018; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Rowe, 2008; Rutgers, 2021). By working together, community colleges quickly shifted to a remote modality. Community colleges ensured students had the support they needed to get to the finish line. In fact, according to Rutgers (2021) communication between faculty and students was a key factor in student success early in the pandemic. Similarly, community college leadership worked diligently to bring everyone safely back for face-to-face classes. Although not perfect, “We learned that if we work together, listen to each other and solve problems together, creative solutions emerge organically” (Rutgers, 2021, para.4).

Another key learning, in addition to collaboration, is the effectiveness of telemedicine. We learned that telemedicine can be very useful, particularly for individuals suffering less intense mood and anxiety issues. Telemedicine produced successful outcomes for many individuals during the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, the field of telemedicine has been forever changed (Rutgers, 2021).

Besides the import of telemedicine, individuals reflected on their lives and priorities during the pandemic (Rutgers, 2021). Many individuals thought about their careers and realized they wanted jobs that were personalized to meet their needs (Brassey & Kruyt, 2020). This resulted in what many have termed the Great Resignation as masses quit their jobs to pursue their

passion or more rewarding careers. Striving to juggle numerous demands, many educators felt overwhelmed and burned out during the pandemic. In fact, many workers are still experiencing anxiety and stress (Rutgers, 2021). Some employees are still concerned about returning to the office. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* October 2020 survey, 55% of United States college faculty have contemplated a career change or early retirement (Nietzel, 2021). Additionally, other survey results indicated 69% of participants “felt stressed” (32% in 2019), 35% of participants “felt angry” (12% in 2019), and 68% “felt fatigued” (32% in 2019) (Nietzel, 2021, para. 6). Only 13% of the participants “felt hopeful” which was a significant decrease from 41% in 2019 (Nietzel, 2021, para 6). Mental health is now a key leadership issue. If leaders do not prioritize mental health they will lose valuable employee engagement and ultimately their competitive edge (Rutgers, 2021).

Focusing on career choices was a key focus during the pandemic. Another critical pandemic learning was understanding the power of emotions and social connections. During lockdown individuals had a strong desire for “meaningful connections” (Rutgers, 2021, para. 28). While we gained technological connectivity, we lost the critical in-person connection. These connections help build relationship networks within our organizations and are a valuable aspect of organizational culture.

Summary

During and following a crisis, individuals tend to focus on the negative. There were, however, many bright spots during the COVID-19 pandemic. The five community college presidents demonstrated their resolve and commitment to prioritize faculty, staff, student and community safety. Working collaboratively, faculty and staff launched online courses in record time. Community colleges provided much needed laptops and hotspots to students who could no

longer access computer labs and libraries. Faculty and staff became adept at using Teams and Zoom. The new dress code was business wear on top and pajamas on the bottom. Working from home (WFH) became the new norm. For many individuals, it helped them recognize the importance of personal connections. For many individuals, not being able to physically connect with family and friends was heartbreaking.

The pandemic also exposed our vulnerabilities. It demonstrated the deficiencies in our community college crisis management plans. We need to plan for a wide range of potential scenarios which include pandemics such as COVID-19. These crisis management plans should also include mental health services. The length, isolation, uncertainty, and ebbs and flows of the pandemic were very problematic. Many lost family and friends to the illness. All these factors contributed to record levels of mental health issues. Effectively using crisis communications, some leaders served as beacons of light in a dark storm. COVID-19 helped us realize we are more dependent upon each other than ever before. As stated by Erik Erikson, “Life doesn’t make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that the better for us all.” (We need, n.d.).

Recommendations for Practice

Campus crises have become a part of our everyday lives often culminating in ominous consequences for the institution and its stakeholders (Booker, 2011; Garcia, 2015; Merriman, 2008; Sutherland, 2013). During a crisis, timing is pivotal, and leaders must be prepared to react. Community college leaders navigated through the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the research results, these five recommendations are discussed below: prioritize safety of faculty, staff, students and the community; develop broad-based crisis management programs, encourage

leaders to include mental health services in crisis planning, leverage crisis communications, and understand the criticality of connections.

Prioritize Safety of Faculty, Staff, Students and the Community

All five community college presidents prioritized safety of their faculty, staff, students and the community. One president stated, “we will do everything we can within reason to make certain we are keeping everyone safe and that includes students, employees and the community.” Another president related, his/her main concern was to “maintain the health and safety of everyone there.” Like J and J’s handling of Tylenol tampering in 1982, the community college presidents prioritized safety over revenue. The colleges lost enrollment and room and board revenue due to the pandemic. As mentioned by one community college president, “we kept everyone’s safety paramount with any decision that came across our desk.”

Develop Broad-based Crisis Management Plans

In addition to having a safety focus, it is imperative to have broad-based crisis management plans (Clair & Waddock, 2007; James & Wooten, 2005). Even though the COVID-19 pandemic might have been the deadliest virus outbreak in more than a hundred years, Penn (2021) asserted these outbreaks “aren’t as rare as we may think” (para. 1). According to Penn (2021), the probability of experiencing a pandemic like COVID-19 is approximately 2% in any year. This means someone born in 2000 would have had approximately a 38% chance of experiencing a pandemic by 2021. Moreover, based on recent data, the chance of disease outbreaks is increasing rapidly (Penn, 2021). It is estimated the “probability of novel disease outbreaks will likely grow three-fold in the next few decades” (Penn, 2021, para. 8). Thus, it is imperative we adjust our perceptions regarding the risks of pandemics and prepare accordingly (Penn, 2021).

Despite these staggering pandemic statistics, many community college presidents commented, they “didn’t have a playbook for operating during a pandemic.” Similarly, another president stated, “we didn’t have any guidelines to help us navigate or negotiate through or how to respond to a pandemic.” Additionally, presidents did not feel properly trained to deal with a pandemic. Comments included “we haven’t trained for this, no one has” and “I never took a class regarding how to deal with a pandemic.”

In addition to including pandemics, educational leaders should ensure crisis management planning and training address a wide range of potential scenarios (Jarrell et al., 2008). Due to the complexity of higher educational operations, Mitroff (2005) asserted these institutions must have plans to prevent and respond to an array of potential crises falling in many categories: “crime,” “informational,” “building safety,” “athletics,” “visitors,” “health,” “unethical behavior/misconduct,” “major power outages,” “natural disasters/fires,” “legal/labor disputes,” “financial” and “perceptual/reputational” (p. 47). One of the community college presidents had an extensive background in emergency management preparedness. Although community college presidents should plan for a wide variety of crises, he/she stated, “The most frequent crisis in higher education is related to information technology” while “The second one is probably weather.” He/she continued, “Free speech is a fairly common crisis piece right now that you should be prepared for...” Additionally, you may “have some kind of situation where a student is targeted individually or because of who they are or where they come from, their ethnicity, their gender, their sexual orientation.” It is critical to “Also [recognize] the reality” that a crisis is...no longer a private incident”...it “is a social media storm.” Other crises that are “you have to be prepared for, is a fire in the residence hall, a murder on campus, or a high profile reported sexual assault. Those are fairly common emergencies as well as student suicide.”

Include Mental Health Services in Crisis Planning

In addition to taking a broad-based planning approach, leaders should also include mental health services in their crisis planning process. The isolation, uncertainty, and length of the pandemic resulted in unrivaled mental health issues. A president related, “we have had tragedy in our leadership...losing faculty, losing students...those are the kind of emotions that I think really have evolved during this pandemic.” The pandemic was a unique experience. Due to the pandemic ebbs and flows, it was challenging to establish a rhythm. Just when individuals would think things were back to normal something would happen. Due to COVID-19, students would miss classes, daycares would become unavailable, family members would get ill, etc. One community college president related, after “seeing that collective trauma impact” he/she “would have brought more face-to-face mental health opportunities on campus.”

Following a crisis event, organizations should be prepared to deliver Psychological First Aid which provides individuals a critical “human connection” (Flynn & Sharma, 2016, p. 80) to assist them through the process (Brymer et al., 2006; Watson, 2008). Immediately following the crisis, a mental health needs assessment should be conducted (Flynn & Sharma, 2016) since 94% of crisis survivors begin feeling posttraumatic stress symptoms the week of the crisis event (North, 2003). This assessment helps identify those individuals who are at greatest risk for experiencing mental health impacts (Flynn & Sharma, 2016; Norris et al., 2002b). Mental health interventions following a crisis generally attempt “to foster resiliency, prevent chronic emotional problems, and minimize long-term deterioration in quality of life” (Norris et al., 2002b, p. 242). A president said, he/she “[over]estimated how resilient the faculty and staff were as they had to deal with the mental health impact at home and at work.” To successfully recover and rebuild

following a crisis, crisis leaders must be adept at effectively addressing the crisis emotions and trauma (Mitroff, 2005).

Leverage Crisis Communications

Besides including mental health services in the planning process, crisis leaders must effectively leverage their crisis communications. Crisis survivors desire knowledge following an incident thus making communication critical (Hincker, 2014). Providing information regarding the event can assist in reducing anxiety and can also provide key resource information (Flynn & Sharma, 2016). Information should be repeated to ensure everyone is well informed. Additionally, communication timeliness is imperative especially concerning mental health issues (Flynn & Sharma, 2016).

When developing crisis communications, community college presidents have several factors to consider. The length, tone, and communication medium must align with the message and the intended audience. Depending on the message, students, for example, are more aligned with Canvas emails or communications via social media sites. Some presidents effectively created personalized YouTube or Facebook videos for their students as well as their faculty and staff. Regarding other stakeholders, different communication mediums may be more effective including radio, television, group emails, website updates, and newsletters. In a crisis it is imperative leaders are highly visible. Stakeholders look to leaders for answers and find it reassuring when they frequently receive communications. Moreover, having some consistently timed communications provides some much needed stability during times of stress.

Understand Criticality of Connections

In addition to leveraging crisis communications, effective leaders need to understand the criticality of connections. During the pandemic, due to social distancing, there was a “hunger for

meaningful connections” (Rutgers, 2021, para. 28). While our technology connectivity increased, at the same time we lost our vital “in-person connection” (Brassey et al., 2022, para. 2). By working with coworkers, relationship networks develop and evolve in the organization (Brassey et al., 2022). Over time these relationship networks support the overall organization and its culture. Unfortunately, these relationship networks were negatively impacted during the pandemic. The community college presidents stated their colleges performed best in a face-to-face environment. According to one president, “the pandemic has had an adverse effect on the culture of this organization because what we do best is the one-on-one interaction.” Rebuilding these relationships is fundamental to the organization’s culture and ultimately its survival (Brassey et al., 2022). Reinforcing those emotional connections can greatly reduce employee attrition. Two community college presidents were working to improve their campus culture. One utilized team building activities to foster team spirit and increase morale whereas the other president created a culture task force. Based on Brassey et al.’s (2022) research, in order to attract and keep talent, it is essential to develop a sense of belonging and encourage stronger relationship bonds.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on this research study, there are many areas where additional research is required to better understand crisis leadership. Potential future research topics include:

This research study’s population was narrowly defined to Midwestern community college presidents. Thus, this research study could be duplicated with other community colleges outside the Midwest as well as universities across the United States.

2. There are several research studies that could look at communication. Another research study could examine how the communication mediums utilized by leaders of educational

institutions impact crisis management. Research could also examine how different communication mediums such as social media influence stakeholder's emotional outlook. Another research study could examine different communication mediums and their effectiveness in reaching the intended audience in a crisis situation.

3. Third, a research study could be conducted to measure the effectiveness of community college's mental health capabilities during a crisis. A related study, which could be qualitative or quantitative, could involve asking students, faculty or staff about their pandemic college experience. What did they like? What did they dislike? What were their perceptions of their institution's leadership during the pandemic?

4. Midwestern community college presidents' perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic could be examined using quantitative research methods.

5. A research study could examine larger community colleges with student enrollment exceeding 10,000 students who are in charge of on campus housing. Tribal, technical, trade and private colleges would all be included in the study.

6. Finally, research, which could be qualitative or quantitative, could examine community college president's perceptions in 2023 or later. Leaders could be asked to reflect on the pandemic and examine what long term changes have occurred as a result of COVID-19.

What were their big "a ha" moments?

Conclusion

When the pandemic started in the spring of 2020 the world's focus was on eradicating the virus. As a result, nations responded through massive lockdowns which interrupted normal social interactions. Federal, state and local agencies issued guidance as they attempted to flatten the curve. Social distancing, remote working, and the use of Zoom and Teams soon became the

norm. Workers found themselves quickly classified as either an essential or non-essential worker. Millions of people soon found themselves out of work and the U.S. economy was forced into a recession. Supply chains and assembly lines ground to a halt. Congress passed stimulus bills to help those struggling with the hopes of minimizing evictions, foreclosures, and bankruptcies. Some individuals, such as the undocumented and racial and ethnic minorities, were amongst those hardest hit due to often having unstable living situations and typically less earnings and less savings. The restaurant and hospitality industries were especially hard hit. In those early days and weeks, the primary goal was the health and safety of the public.

Community colleges, for the most part, received and followed the mandates handed down from the governmental and health entities. These mandates provided community college presidents a certain level of protection. If challenged regarding these mandates, they could simply state they were following the rules handed down by higher authorities. Community college presidents continually placed the safety of their staff, faculty, students and the community as their primary priority. Many community college presidents were concerned how potential outbreaks on campus could not only result in death and illness, but also its potential impact on the local community.

Over time, the focus on the health and welfare of the many, was overtaken by individual rights. Other factors including politics and economics became driving forces impacting how governmental and health entities dealt with the crisis. Individuals challenged mask mandates and COVID-19 protocols. Community colleges were no longer insulated by the governmental mandates. Community colleges were forced to make and continually defend COVID-19 related mandates and protocols. In some areas, different governmental entities created conflicting

mandates. Instead of bringing the nation together, COVID-19 has highlighted the stark political divide in the United States.

In 2022 community colleges experienced increased employee turnover due to COVID-19. Faced with significant disruption, and mounting levels of COVID-19, faculty and staff felt increased levels of stress and anxiety forcing some to either retire or change careers. Others did not approve the shift to online learning and chose to leave the educational field. Due to budgetary concerns, many colleges chose to leave those positions unfilled. Unfortunately, during this Great Resignation, community colleges struggled to find applicants for the positions they did try to fill. In past years, the applicant pool could be slim at times particularly for small rural community colleges. However, during the pandemic many lamented that there were often no job applicants.

Unfortunately, crisis are no longer rare events, they are becoming increasingly common, and the consequences can be dire. Safety of students, faculty, staff and the community is paramount. Valuing their community relationships, community college presidents were concerned if any campus outbreaks would impact the local community. Community college presidents must be prepared for a wide range of potential crises, including disease outbreaks. A critical aspect of the crisis planning process is understanding, planning and providing for the mental health needs of faculty, staff, and students.

Effective leaders realize the import of dealing with crisis emotions. Additionally, they must successfully communicate with their constituents since following a crisis, there is a strong desire for information. By providing consistent communication, leaders help to provide some critical stability in a difficult time.

The pandemic demonstrated a strong connection exists between leadership and crises as faculty, staff and students looked to their community college presidents for answers. I believe John F. Kennedy understood the many facets of crisis when he stated, “When written in Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity.” (Remarks, 1959, para. 8). Although we do not pursue them, when crises occur, an effective leader sees not only the challenges but also the opportunities the crisis presents.

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Appendix A - Interview Protocol

First Interview

1. In March 2020, institutions started shutting down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Can you share your initial leadership responses to the COVID-19 pandemic? What was happening for you and your institution?
2. How would you describe your leadership style before the COVID pandemic? Why? Would you provide an example of how you used this style prior to the pandemic?
3. Tell me what it was like to lead this community college through the pandemic. What leadership characteristics were you mindful of or used often?
4. What previous experiences helped you during the COVID crisis in higher education?
5. Community college presidents are responsible to multiple stakeholders. How did governing boards, state and federal regulations, impact your leadership actions during the pandemic? Can you give me an example of how these impacted your leadership through the crisis?
6. What has been the biggest challenge working under the community college model of shared governance during the pandemic?

Thank you for your observations. Are there any other comments you would like to make at this time?

[Debriefing Statements]

This completes the first of two interviews. As indicated in the consent form, these responses will be transcribed, and you will have an opportunity to review them. I will send the transcription following the second interview.

Second Interview

7. What was the greatest challenge you faced during the COVID crisis? What surprised you the most regarding the pandemic?
8. If you were able to change any of your leadership actions during the pandemic, what would you do differently?
9. Focus on your leadership through the pandemic from March 2020 to December 2021, what surprised you the most regarding leading an institution through the pandemic?
10. What are the most important leadership characteristics or qualities in a crisis?
11. In terms of community college governance and your leadership role, what have you learned as a result of the COVID pandemic?

12. What advice would you give to a new community college president about leading a community college through a health crisis?

13. With hindsight, is there anything you would do differently as you led the institution through the pandemic?

Thank you for your observations. Are there any other comments you would like to make at this time?

[Debriefing Statements]

This completes the interview portion of this study. As indicated in the consent form, these responses will be transcribed, and you will have an opportunity to review them. If you would like to receive a copy of the final dissertation, please let me know. I will be happy to provide an electronic copy.

Again, thank you for your assistance on this important study of the impact of the COVID pandemic on community college president's leadership styles and behaviors. If you would like to contact me during the dissertation process, I may be reached by email at llhunke@ksu.edu.

Appendix B - Artifact Collection

Artifacts can provide important insight and context for the researcher conducting qualitative studies. Following the completion of the interview, the respective college website will be searched for college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher will search for any college specific, public COVID-19 sites and newsletters or letters from the president. Artifacts will be collected for the March 2020 and December 2021 timeframe in an attempt to gather communications relating to the beginning of the pandemic impact on the college.

Each artifact will be analyzed for the following:

1. Publication source
2. Publication title
3. Date
4. Topics covered
5. Descriptive language used
 - a. Positive language
 - b. Negative language
 - c. Neutral language
6. Communication style
 - a. Formal*
 - b. Informal*
7. Comm. purpose/objective
 - a. "To inform"
 - b. "To request"
 - c. "To persuade"
 - d. "To build relationships"(Albanese, 2021, para. 2)
8. Communication theme
 - a. Clearly presents viewpoint
 - b. Consistent messaging
 - c. Word choice duplic./jargon
9. Communication frequency
10. Communication timing
11. Summary

Definitions:

Positive language: Provides information regarding what to do (Intelligent, n.d.) and “focuses on what can be done instead of what can't be done” (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2014, p. 35). Positive messaging is proactive and encouraging (Intelligent, n.d.) and emphasizes “a willingness to help” and focuses on “positive actions and positive consequences” (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2014, p. 35). By using positive language, recipients are provided options (Intelligent, n.d.). Positive language is “helpful, reassuring, supportive, kind, empathetic” (Intelligent, n.d., para. 8). According to Simoneaux and Stroud (2014), there are several positive words such as “value, benefit, pleasure, please, happy, help, glad, delighted, appreciate, and thank you” (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2014, p. 35).

Negative language: frequently “sounds like commands” or contains “subtle implications of blame” (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2014, p. 35). Negative messages, stated Simoneaux and Stroud (2014) “imply an unwillingness to help or suggest alternative solutions” (p. 35) and can sound judgmental (Intelligent, n.d.). Unlike positive language, Negative communication is passive and reactive (Intelligent, n.d.). Some negative words include “can't, won't, don't, stop, shouldn't and also, those beginning with negative prefixes such as -un, -in, -ir (inconvenient, unpleasant, incompetent, irresponsible)” (Intelligent, n.d., para. 27).

Neutral language: “is preferable when we are trying to get to the facts or follow an argument since our emotions often cloud our reasoning. It is considered fair, accurate, and objective” (Philosophy, n.d., para. 6). Language is comprised of two components the “literal meaning and emotional meaning” (Philosophy, n.d., para 2). Different words can have literal meanings that are similar, yet due to the use of emotive words have very different meanings (Philosophy, n.d.). Neutral language removes the emotional component.

Formal communication style is “cold,” “objective,” “neutral,” “rational,” “controlled,” “effortful,” and “abstract” (van Opzeeland, 2017, para. 12). Formal communication refrains from using contractions, usage of personal pronouns is minimized, and utilizes longer sentences. Additionally, formal communication uses refined word choices and official titles and avoids the use of slang. Formal correspondence avoids using analogies and anecdotes (van Opzeeland, 2017).

Informal communication style is “warm,” “subjective,” “involved,” “emotional,” “uncontrolled,” “effortless” and “practical” (van Opzeeland, 2017, para. 12). Informal communication, like everyday communication, utilizes personal pronouns, contractions, and slang. Little concern is given regarding official titles. Moreover, informal correspondence utilizes analogies and anecdotes (van Opzeeland, 2017).

Word choice duplication or use of jargon: Is a certain word being repeatedly used? The word may be slang or jargon. Although jargon does run the risk of losing an audience, it may help to show you are a member of a particular group (van Opzeeland, 2017).

Appendix C - IRB Approval



TO: Royce Ann Collins
Educational Leadership
Manhattan, KS 66506
Proposal Number IRB-10967

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 12/22/2021

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Community college president's perceptions of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 12/22/2021

EXPIRATION DATE: 12/21/2024

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Rick Scheidt on 12/25/2021 11:19 AM ET

Appendix D - Participant Invitation Email

Email

Dear _____:

I am a doctoral candidate at Kansas State University in the Adult Learning and Leadership program. I am currently conducting research for my dissertation. I am requesting your participation in a research study regarding community college presidents' experiences of leading the institution through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minimal research has been conducted regarding how a leader should respond during a crisis. This research will provide additional insight that will contribute to the field of community college leadership during a crisis.

Data for this research include interviews and review of artifacts on the community college website related to COVID-19 (such as dashboards or specific COVID sites) and any statements made by the president from March 2020 to December 2021. If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in two 60-75 minute Zoom interviews. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be assigned to each participating president. With your permission, each interview will be recorded. Once the interview is complete, the video portion will be deleted. I will retain a copy of the transcript and audio for analysis purposes only. A copy of the informed consent is attached for you to review.

You will receive a copy of the transcript and have the opportunity to clarify or change any comments previously made.

I will be available to respond to any questions or concerns you may have regarding the study. Feel free to contact me at llhunke@ksu.edu. If at any time, you decide you would rather not have the information you provided published in my dissertation, I will remove any information you have provided. My major professor is Dr. Royce Ann Collins. You may also feel free to contact her if you have any questions (racollin@ksu.edu).

If you are willing to assist my research, please respond to this email by (date to be entered). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Hunke

Appendix E - Informed Consent Form

Community college president's perception of leadership during COVID-19 pandemic

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE: 12/22/2021

EXPIRATION DATE: 12/21/2024

LENGTH OF STUDY: Approximately six months.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Royce Ann Collins, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Adult Learning and Leadership, Educational Leadership Department

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Lori Hunke, Doctoral Student

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Dr. Royce Ann Collins, (913) 307-7353

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions regarding consent to participate in this research, feel free to contact one of the following Kansas State University Institutional Review Board Members:

Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how the COVID 19 pandemic affected leadership styles and behaviors of Midwestern community college presidents. The study is driven primarily by one question regarding the president's understanding how their leadership style and behaviors had changed in response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: Data for this research include interviews and review of artifacts on the community college website related to COVID-19 (such as dashboards or specific COVID sites) and any statements or actions made by the president from March 2020 to December 2021. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in two interviews lasting 60-75 minutes. The interviews will be conducted remotely using password-protected Zoom link. The video file will be deleted, and the audio file retained for transcription purposes. You will be assigned a pseudonym and all identifying information will be removed. You will be provided the opportunity to review all interview transcripts for accuracy. Follow up interviews may be completed to clarify information and to allow you to give feedback. In addition, the community college website will be examined for the purpose of collecting any communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic from the president, any information on the college's specific COVID-19 website, any video recordings of the president speaking about COVID to the community still posted, and web based college specific newsletters from March 2020 to December 2021.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: There are no expected discomfort or risks related to this study. You may voluntarily withdraw from this research at any time.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: A potential benefit to this study includes understanding leadership during a crisis. Minimal study has been conducted regarding how a leader should respond during a crisis.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: No identifying information of individual participants will be collected, nor will the individual responses be in any way linked with your identity. You will be assigned a pseudonym. No information concerning the college will be included in the research. Following the Zoom video conference interview, the video portion will be deleted. Only the audio and transcript will be retained for analysis purposes. The audio file will be downloaded to a password protected computer owned by the researcher. All electronic documents will be maintained in a password-protected electronic format for three years on a hard drive and stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, the data will be deleted from all electronic storage and all hard copies shredded.

The information or biospecimens that will be collected as part of this research will not be shared with any other investigators.

At the conclusion of the study, research results will be available to you upon request. You may contact the doctoral student at lhunke@ksu.edu.

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name:

Participant Signature

Date:

Witness to Signature:

Date:

Appendix F - Study Timeline

Timeline	Role of Researcher	Role of Participant
Week 1 – Week 2	Emails sent to potential participants, Begin transcribing interviews	Willing to participate, Confirmed date
Week 3 – Week 4	Emails sent for secondary interviews, Develop interview questions for second interview, Begin transcribing interviews	Willing to participate, Confirmed date
Week 5 – Week 6	Finalized Remaining secondary interviews, Develop interview questions for second interview Begin transcribing interviews	Willing to participate, Confirmed date
Week 6	Complete transcribing Member Check – Sent transcriptions to all participants for review	Review Transcription
Week 7 – Week 8	Member Check	Responded regarding Transcription
Week 9 – Week 11	Develop Initial Codes	
Week 12 – Week 13	Review/Analyze Artifact Data	
Week 14 – Week 15	Triangulate Artifact Data	
Week 16 – Week 17	Review & Refine Codes	

Appendix G - Research Questions Aligned with Data Sources

Research Question	Interview Question	Conceptual Framework	Artifact Analysis
RQ 1. How do community college presidents describe any changes to their leadership style and behaviors during this crisis?	2. How would you describe your leadership style before the COVID pandemic? Why? Would you provide an example of how you used this style prior to the pandemic?	Crisis Leadership Styles	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
	11. In terms of community college governance and your leadership role, what have you learned as a result of the COVID pandemic?*	Crisis Leadership Styles, Community College Governance	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
RQ 2. How do community college presidents describe the characteristics of leadership during this crisis?	3. Tell me what it was like to lead this community college through the pandemic. What leadership characteristics were you mindful of or used often?	Effective Leadership, Crisis Phases & Competencies	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
	7. What was the greatest challenge you faced during the COVID crisis? What surprised you the most regarding the pandemic?	Effective Leadership Competencies, Crisis Phases & Competencies, Community College Governance	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
	8. If you were able to change any of your leadership actions during the pandemic, what would you do differently?	Effective Leadership Competencies, Crisis Phases & Competencies, Community College Governance	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
	9. Focus on your leadership through the pandemic from March 2020 to December 2021, what surprised you the most regarding leading an institution through the pandemic?	Effective Leadership Competencies, Crisis Phases & Competencies, Community College Governance	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
	10. What are the most important leadership characteristics or qualities in a crisis?	Effective Leadership Competencies, Crisis Phases & Competencies	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing

	Research Question	Interview Question	Conceptual Framework	Artifact Analysis
	RQ 3. How do community college presidents describe their initial administrative/ leadership behaviors or steps they took early during this pandemic?	1. In March 2020, institutions started shutting down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Can you share your initial leadership responses to the COVID-19 pandemic? What was happening for you and your institution?	Effective Leadership Competencies, Crisis Phases & Competencies	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
		4. What previous experiences helped you during the COVID crisis in higher education?	Effective Leadership Competencies, Crisis Phases & Competencies, Community College Governance	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
		12. What advice would you give to a new community college president about leading a community college through a health crisis?	Effective Leadership Competencies	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
		13. With hindsight, is there anything you would do differently as you led the institution through the pandemic?	Effective Leadership Competencies, Crisis Phases & Competencies	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
	RQ 4. How do community college presidents describe the experience of community college governance during the COVID-19 global pandemic?	5. Community college presidents are responsible to multiple stakeholders. How did governing boards, state and federal regulations, impact your leadership actions during the pandemic? Can you give me an example of how these impacted your leadership through the crisis?	Community College Governance	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
		6. What has been the biggest challenge working under the community college model of shared governance during the pandemic?	Community College Governance, Effective Leadership Competencies	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
		11. In terms of community college governance and your leadership role, what have you learned as a result of the COVID pandemic?*	Crisis Leadership Styles, Community College Governance	Examine college president communications regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze articles for: language, point of view, content & communication themes, word choice & duplication, communication frequency & timing
*Question 11 is shown under both RQ 1 & RQ 4.				

Appendix H - Initial Themes and Sub-Themes

Sub-Themes	Themes
Sports Students worried about college experience	College Experience College Experience
Close communication with experts Deciding how best to communicate Shift to Zoom & Teams	Communication Communication Communication
Community colleges are best in a face-to-face environment Departments of one Impact COVID-19 and working remotely has had on college culture	Culture Culture Culture
Budgeting concerns Enrollment	Financial Financial
Build relationship with board Collaborate with peers Important leadership competencies Visible in community	Leadership Leadership Leadership Leadership
Innovative ways to assist mental health Ongoing nature of the virus (longevity) Uncertainty/fatigue	Mental Health Mental Health Mental Health
Brought in extra resources to assist faculty w/ move to new modality Extended spring break to shift to online format Virtual classes posed challenge for Career & Technical Education	Pandemic Response Pandemic Response Pandemic Response
Diversity of views Early pandemic easier due to government mandates Fake news Shared governance works but takes time Some students/parents/donors/staff didn't support masking/vaccines The importance of health and safety decreased due to politics	Politics Politics Politics Politics Politics Politics
Concerned they would cause an outbreak in the community Keeping all stakeholders safe	Safety Safety
Changing CDC/Government COVID-19 Guidelines – causing confusion Unclear guidelines regarding use of COVID-19 funding	Unknown Unknown

Appendix I - Revised Codes

Themes	Sub-Themes	Categories
Return to Face-to-Face	Adjusted Schedule	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Cleaning/Safety Measures	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	COVID-19 Website	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Didn't want Online Learning	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Faculty/Peer Input	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Greater Online Acceptance	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Learning to Live with COVID-19	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Online Deficiencies	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Phased Plan	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Rely on Experts	Initial Administrative Issues
Return to Face-to-Face	Student Experience	Initial Administrative Issues
Shifted to Remote	Remote Learning Challenges	Initial Administrative Issues
Shifted to Remote	Response	Initial Administrative Issues
Shifted to Remote	Keep Everyone Safe	Initial Administrative Issues
Shifted to Remote	No COVID-19 Playbook	Initial Administrative Issues
Shifted to Remote	Questions/Confusion	Initial Administrative Issues
Shifted to Remote	Rapid Changes	Initial Administrative Issues
Shifted to Remote	Rely on Experts	Initial Administrative Issues
Consistent/Continual Communication Medium	NA	Communication
Communicate the Why	NA	Communication
Uncertainty	NA	Communication
Faculty/Staff Recognition	NA	Communication
Strategic	NA	Communication

Themes	Sub-Themes	Categories
Cohesive Team	NA	Governance
Diverse Perspectives	NA	Governance
Evolving Protocols	NA	Governance
Government Funds	NA	Governance
Level of Accountability	NA	Governance
Political Influence	NA	Governance
Sports	NA	Governance
Accountability	NA	Governance
Calm Demeanor	NA	Leadership Competencies
Collaboration	NA	Leadership Competencies
Confidence	NA	Leadership Characteristics
Data Driven Decision Making	NA	Leadership Competencies
Emotional Intelligence/Aptitude	NA	Leadership Competencies
Empathy	NA	Leadership Competencies
Good Communication Skills	NA	Leadership Competencies
Honesty	NA	Leadership Competencies
Humor	NA	Leadership Competencies
Positivity	NA	Leadership Competencies
Resiliency/Adaptability	NA	Leadership Competencies
Trust	NA	Leadership Competencies
Coaching Leader	Assess Skills, Knowledge & Abilities	Leadership Style
Coaching Leader	Based on Situation	Leadership Style
Coaching Leader	Collaboration	Leadership Style
Coaching Leader	Empower Employees	Leadership Style
Coaching Leader	Conflict Resolution	Leadership Style
Coaching Leader	Not in Minutia	Leadership Style
Coaching Leader	Position Power	Leadership Style
Coaching Leader	Team Development	Leadership Style

Themes	Sub-Themes	Categories
Servant Leader	Does not use position power	Leadership Style
Servant Leader	Power of Community	Leadership Style
Democratic Leader	Actively Involved	Leadership Style
Democratic Leader	Open to Taking Risks	Leadership Style
Democratic Leader	Supportive	Leadership Style
Democratic Leader	Values Feedback	Leadership Style
Community Support	NA	Culture
Face-to-Face Environment	NA	Culture
Not Alone	NA	Culture
Staffing Issues	NA	Culture
Team Building	NA	Culture
Fatigue	NA	Mental Health
Mental Health Services	NA	Mental Health
Mental Outlook	NA	Mental Health
Others Similar	NA	Mental Health
Questioning Profession	NA	Mental Health
So Much Loss	NA	Mental Health
Take Time for Yourself	NA	Mental Health
Uncertainty	NA	Mental Health
Budget Issues	NA	Financial Issues
Enrollment	NA	Financial Issues

